

SPECTRUM

The Journal of the Association of Adventist Forums • Autumn 2000 • Volume No. 28, Issue No. 4

**Messages
from
Young
People**

**Personal
Faith
&
Politics**

**Post-Toronto
Triumphalism**

**Adventists
and Ethnic
Conflicts**



SPECTRUM

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SPECTRUM is published by the Association of Adventist Forums, a nonsubsidized, nonprofit organization for which gifts are deductible in the report of income for purposes of taxation. The publishing of SPECTRUM depends on subscriptions, gifts from individuals, and the voluntary efforts of the contributors.

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The image is a digital collage depicting the exuberance, energy, and joy of youth.

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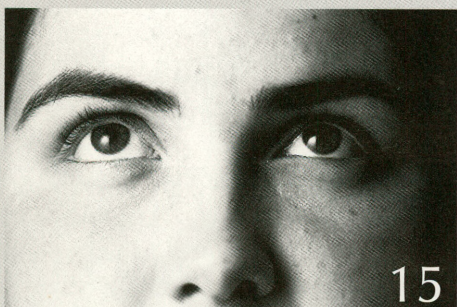
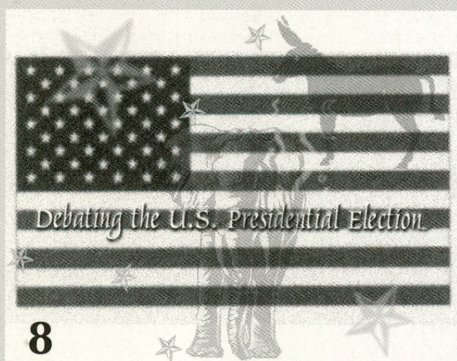
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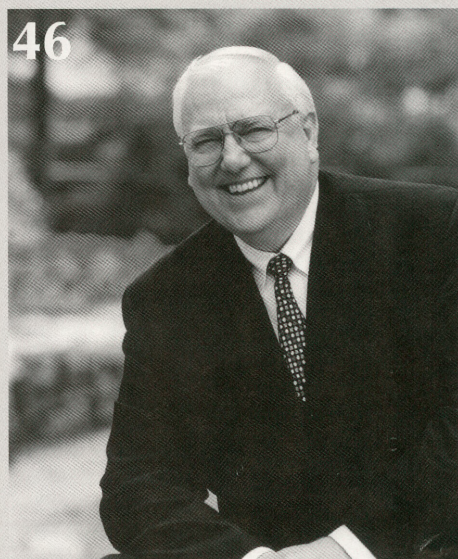
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Questions of the Political Season

“Are you better off today than you were four (or eight) years ago?” The question originally posed by Republican candidate Ronald Reagan and now being used by Democrat Al Gore is intriguing because of where it takes the voter. It bypasses international policy, the state of the armed forces, schools, and Social Security.

The question’s significance resides in the personal reflection. Make your decision based on your personal experience. And that is where we begin our political reflections in this issue—at the personal level. We asked five individuals to reflect on how their faith will influence their vote in November. Quickly we see that our faith can lead us in very different directions.

Moving to church politics we find questions of representation lingering after the General Conference Session. It is with pleasure that we introduce writer Ron Osborn to the *Spectrum* audience. At the beginning of the meetings in Toronto Ron pitched the idea of writing about the aging General Conference leadership. After he saw the charts on the age of the GC delegates he asked to shift his focus to the youth. The next day, he came by the *Spectrum* booth in the exhibit hall to say he had gathered all the young delegates for a discussion the night before. The article idea became an issue even before he left Toronto, and some union conference papers have already addressed the topic.

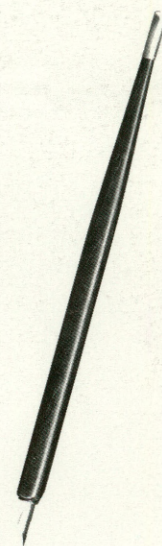
Canadian lawyer Barry Bussey, in addition to getting Canada Post to issue a stamp in honor of Adventists, organized a meeting for Canadian Adventist lawyers prior to the General Conference Session. “Our Responsibility in the Face of Religious Persecution” was the topic for the day, and Bussey brought together an impressive list of speakers. Derek Davis’s presentation helps us expand our thoughts about religious liberty.

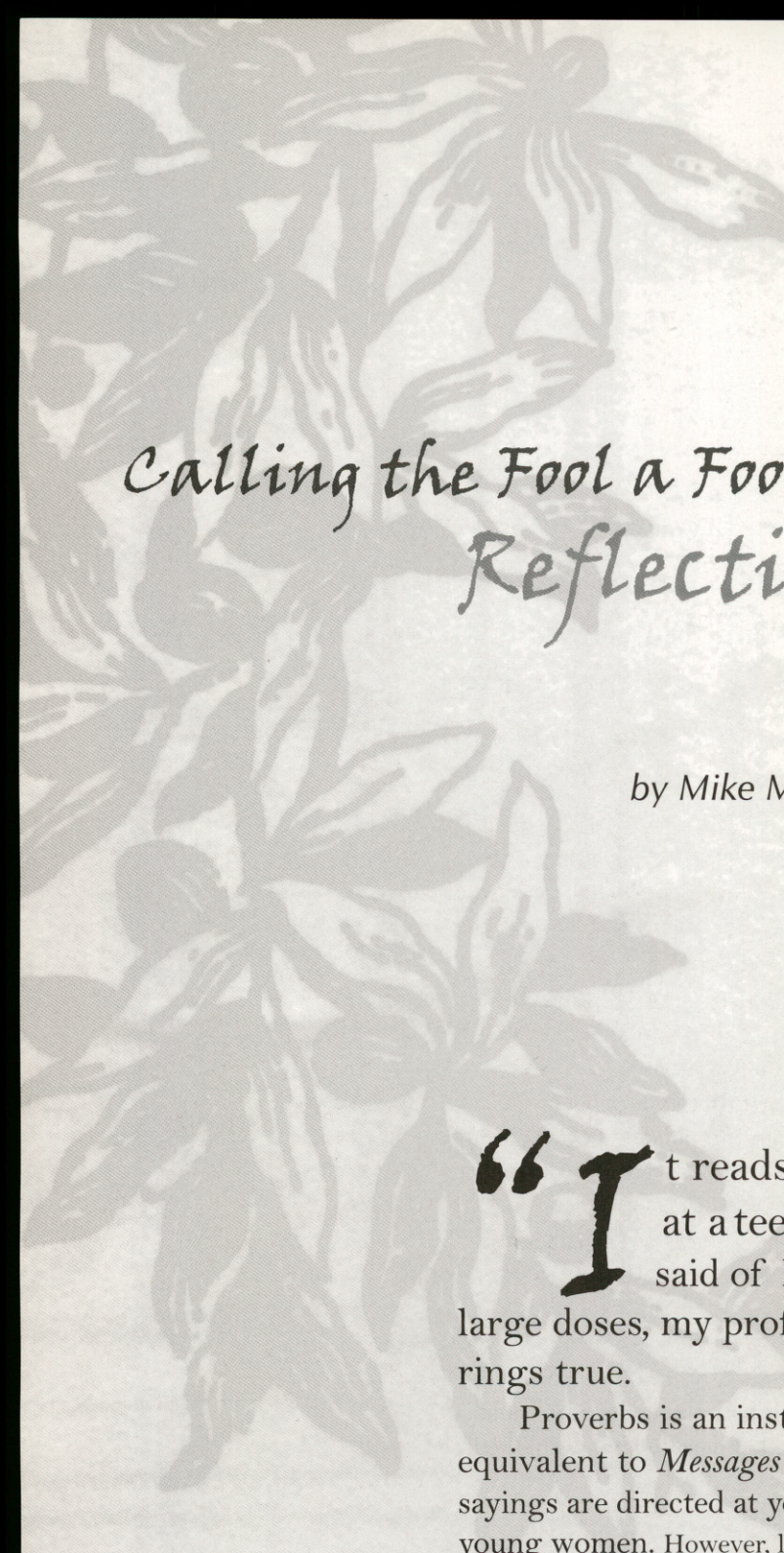
The week that we returned to the *Spectrum* office after General Conference, we heard from Tihomir Kukolja with his reflections on the issue of nationalism.

That Christians have unique views on contemporary issues is the reason that this magazine was created. Therefore, it is a pleasure to delve into politics, to ask questions not only about whether life is better now than it was four or eight years ago, but also to get to that all important question, “How then shall we live?”

Our community life makes a difference in our personal lives.

Bonnie Dwyer
Editor





Calling the Fool a Fool Reflections on Proverbs

by Mike Mennard

"It reads like a codgerly old man barking at a teenager," a professor of mine once said of Proverbs. If one reads Proverbs in large doses, my professor's critical assessment probably rings true.

Proverbs is an instruction book for youth—the biblical equivalent to *Messages to Young People*. Many of the individual sayings are directed at young men, children, and, on a few occasions, young women. However, like *Messages to Young People*, Proverbs is a pithy compilation that is at times preachy, dense, and, dare I say, dated. It's difficult for today's reader to buy wholeheartedly Proverbs' primary assumption: that there is an easily identifiable cause for every effect. What Proverbs seems to suggest in its long series of couplets is that good things ensue from good decisions—and vice versa. In other words, the fool is a fool because he has consciously chosen to be a fool.

Admittedly, Proverbs often is that simple and simplistic. Still, I believe Proverbs offers something useful for the modern reader. Yet to fully appreciate this collection of wise sayings, we must understand its origin and purpose.



From the Vats of the World's Wisdom

Tradition has long attributed Proverbs to Solomon, David's son and successor. In particular, chapters 10-22:16 and 25-29 seem very old indeed, and many scholars are willing to say they might date back to Solomon.

Did Solomon utter these sayings? Or is this a compilation made in honor of Solomon's much-ballyhooed wisdom? Although we can never know for sure, there are some facts worth considering.

We know very little about Solomon's court or the subsequent courts of Judah, but archaeology has uncovered evidence of a large library that dates back to Solomon's kingdom. Such a find speaks volumes—no pun intended—about Solomon himself. Apparently, Solomon—and perhaps his son Rehoboam—mandated the collection of the world's literature.¹ One must assume, then, that Solomon also employed translators and archivists who made the collection accessible to Solomon and his court. If this assumption is correct, it's hardly a stretch to imagine that at least a portion of Proverbs could offer a smattering of wisdom gleaned from the known world of the time.

The sayings in Proverbs are quintessential examples of ancient wisdom literature found throughout the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern region. Most sayings are presented in a conventional couplet form called parallelism, with one line stating a thought followed by a second line that restates the thought. In form and content, Proverbs is consistent with the wisdom literature produced among the Egyptians, the Canaanites, and the Babylonians. It's a form that was later refined and championed by the Greeks.²

Although the parallelism survives the cruel wringer of translation, so much else is lost. The sayings are rich with alliteration, puns, and clever wordplay that are untranslatable. Some sayings, such as the "woman of worth" poem (31:10-31), are acrostic poems, each line beginning with a successive letter in the alphabet. All of this playfulness gets lost in translation, leaving behind a stodgy, oppressive text that does not reflect the exuberance of the original.



Is Ancient Wisdom Still Wisdom?

Still, the question must be asked: Can ancient wisdom be regarded as wisdom at the start of the twenty-first century? Few of us today readily accept that the one “who lives alone is self-indulgent” (18:1). Or that the “rich must rule the poor” (22:7). Some sayings have saddled countless parents with intense guilt, such as Proverbs 22:6: “Train children in the right way, and when old, they will not stray.” When children grow up and permanently stray from the values of their youth, does that mean their parents failed to train them “in the right way”? Sometimes. But not always.

I believe, nonetheless, tremendous value remains embedded in these ancient sayings. According to biblical scholar James G. Williams, everything about Proverbs, “from its basic ideas to its literary forms, affirms order.” According to Williams, “Wisdom in Proverbs is a way of looking at the world and finding order, an order based on personal responsibility and individual discipline.”³

In short, the sayings don’t offer unbending truth as much as consistent principles. And if principles such as “personal responsibility” and “individual discipline” aren’t badly needed antidotes for today’s “victim” mentality, I don’t know what is. What’s more, if we must glean this kind of wisdom from ancient civilizations, so be it.

As a theme, personal responsibility provides not only the basis for order, but also a means for balance when reading Proverbs. The saying, “Train children in the right way” is a good principle, because, more often than not, children come around to the instruction of their youth. However, if they do not, the principle still holds, because those wayward children—not their parents—are responsible for their decisions and actions. And in that principle lies a timely sense of order—order enough on which to build a sound society.

Proverbs 14:29—15:5, translated by Mike Mennard

The one who quells his temper keeps cognizant,
while the one whose temper runs amok is recklessly stupid.

A mind at peace equips the body with power,
while hot passions decompose the bones.

Those who oppress the poor exasperate their Maker,
while those who show the poor compassion make him proud.

Unprincipled people are toppled by their own poisons,
while people of virtue are safely housed by their integrity.

Wisdom feels at home at the table of the wiseman's mind,
while it lingers homeless outside the fool's heart.

Morality makes a nation excel,
while disgrace is a splotch on all the people.

The worker who gets a job done right earns his foreman's approval,
while the one with shoddy work earns his ire.

A coolheaded answer douses hot anger,
while the curt retort fans a flame.

The wise man's tongue dispenses facts,
while fools' mouths gush with flippancy.

YHWH's eyes extend to every point,
and they detect both the immoral and the ethical deed.

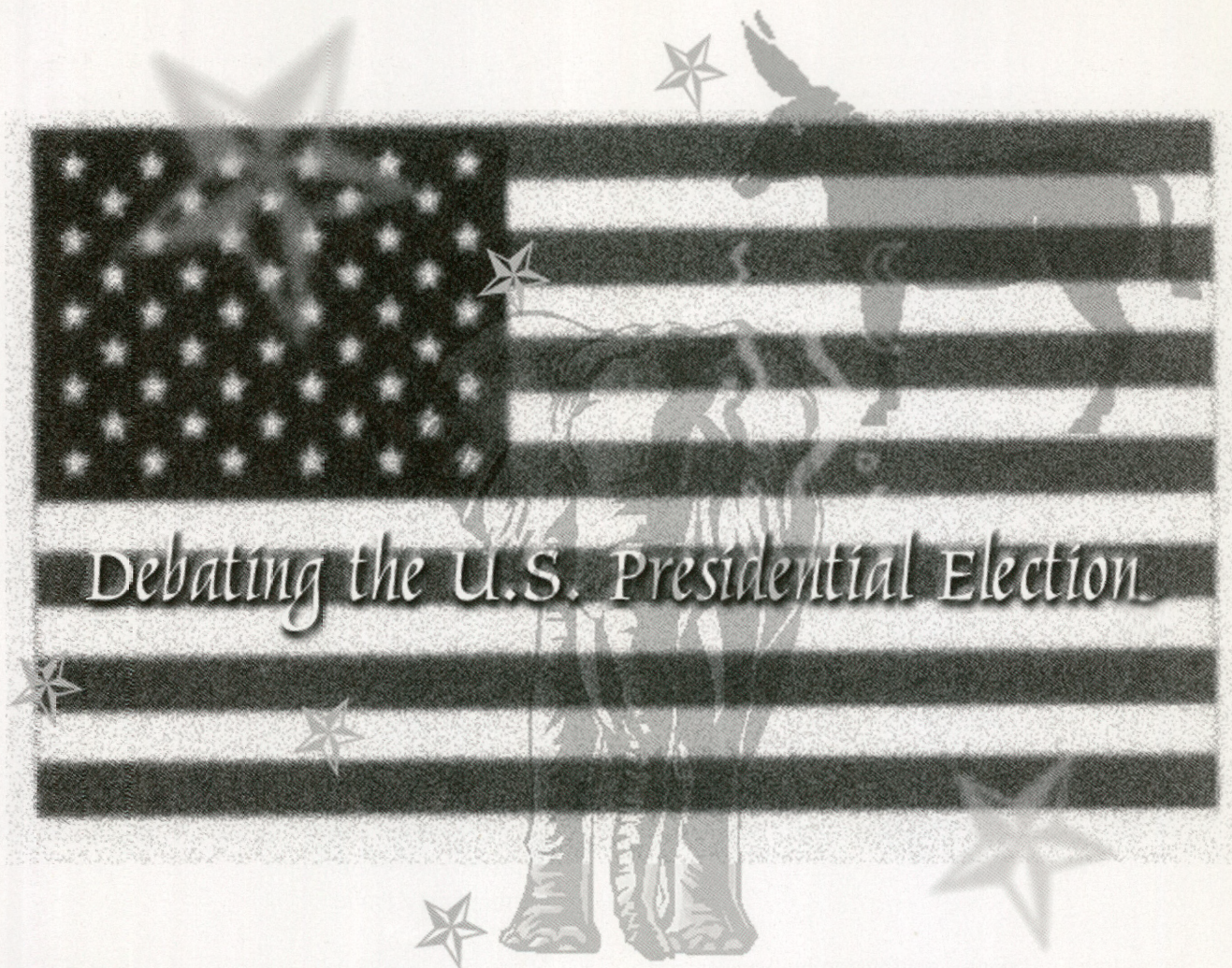
Kind words are a tree of life,
while cantankerousness cracks the spirit.

The fool mocks a parent's help,
while the one who takes advice well is smart, indeed.

Notes and References

1. David Rosenberg, *The Book of David* (New York: Harmony Books, 1997), 21.
2. *The HarperCollins Study Bible* (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), s.v. "Proverbs."
3. *A Literary Guide to the Bible* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987), s.v. "Proverbs and Ecclesiastes."

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Debating the U.S. Presidential Election

Why I'm a Raider

by Nathanael J. Blake

On November 7, Ralph Nader will receive my vote for president of the United States of America. Depending on your definition, I'm a member of Generation Y or X. Whichever category I fall into, stereotypically I should be apathetic and/or apolitical. Perhaps my vote for a candidate who has not a snowball's chance in a Texas summer is an extension of some sort of random antiestablishmentarianism. This is not the case. I've been active (proactive) in politics for years . . . before I could vote. I've lobbied, researched, interned, and protested. I truly believe Ralph Nader would do the best job leading our country.

Of course, at age twenty I can still afford to be an idealist. Nader represents my best choice (not the less-worse choice) and Gore has no chance in my state (Nebraska) already. In the electoral college, it's winner-take-all. Bush will get our five votes. But I believe that Ralph Nader is the best true hope for the 100 million eligible voters who chose not to vote in the last election. If 5 percent of the nationwide popular vote goes to Nader, the Green Party will be able to provide a truly viable progressive alternative in 2004.

Why Ralph?

Maybe it's because my Seventh-day Adventist Christian roots provide such a strong regard for human life. The practice of capital punishment is in direct conflict with my beliefs. Nader is against the death penalty. Also concerned with our quality of life, he is an outspoken proponent of a living wage (making sure people can provide for their family on the hourly wage they earn) and universal health care (scary "socialist" words for some, but basically assuring that everyone—every child, too—in the country has health insurance, including the 46 million Americans who don't have it now).

Nader even cares about people who live outside our nation. He is opposed to free trade agreements that don't take into account the human rights of workers. Instead of building a Defense Department primarily on the basis of preparing for war, Ralph is intent on steering our military toward peace as a priority.

The Bible informs us that we must choose between God and money. I'm voting against continuing corporate corruption of our political process and modern culture. Only Nader will truly work to reform

the de facto plutocracy our nation now suffers under.

In short, Ralph Nader has the needs of the neediest at the forefront of his campaign. His priorities are similar to my Master's. Christ enabled the poor and hurting, giving them hope and life. In the eleventh commandment he asks us to do the same: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt. 22:39, NRSV).

In Micah 6:8, God gives us pretty clear directions on how we should live: "do justice . . . love kindness, and . . . walk humbly with your God." God's instructions to take care of the poor and needy carry over to the ballot box. How could I vote for carbon copy gush-and-bore politicians who oppose justice and kindness? I will not leave my Christianity at the polling booth door.

What would Jesus do? Would Jesus vote for Ralph? Only if Jesus at his age could afford to be an idealist.

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What's God Got to Do with It?

by David A. Pendleton

I've been asked by fellow Adventists whether I'm "voting my faith" this fall. Because I'm an attorney, the answer is, as one might anticipate, "It depends on what one means by 'voting my faith.'"

If one means that our Adventist Christian faith somehow informs us whether the Democrat or the Republican nominee is more godly or whether the Bible tells us anything about the efficiency of free markets versus command and control economies, or if there is a biblical answer to solving the Medicare problem, then the answer is "no." I will not be voting what I think is the Adventist Christian (party) line. That's because there is no such thing. The Bible is God's word, not God's policy briefing.

It goes without saying that God is neither a Democrat nor a Republican. Nor does the Bible provide sufficient details to endorse a given public policy proposal.

Rather, the Bible provides broad principals to apply to real-world situations in a judicious, charitable, and reasoned fashion. The Bible also provides models of Godly leadership—Joseph, Esther, and Daniel, for example.

The Bible is first and foremost concerned with eternal matters—the salvation of our souls—and only secondarily with temporal matters. Yet it makes demands on how we live in the here and now—alas only, unfortunately, with broad principles rather than rule-like prescriptions.

On the other hand, if by “voting my faith” you mean voting consistent with my understanding of biblical principles, then the answer is “yes.” We are told in Micah that the Lord requires that we do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God. That means Adventist Christians must bring to bear in the larger public policy discussion our insights concerning, and appreciation for, righteousness and societal well-being.

No doubt Adventist Christian faith leads us to oppose domestic violence, to fight illiteracy, to provide an effective safety net for the disabled, disadvantaged, and forgotten, and to conserve our environment. The rightness of these ends is unquestionable, but how to pursue these ends is a matter for discussion.

Adventist Christians should be involved in the political process, not because we can benefit our denomination or do special favors for our members, but because we can contribute to the public good. We recognize that true leadership is servant leadership, that service to others rather than self is paramount, and that good intentions never make up for bad consequences.

We have an obligation as Adventist Christians to elevate the public discourse above caricatures and stereotypes, to eschew demonizing the opposition, and to evaluate carefully and evenhandedly all policy propositions on their merits rather than to judge them based on the party affiliation of their introducer.

For example, I personally believe Clinton and Gore have sincerely done what they can to lead the nation. There is no question about motives, so the issue boils down to effectiveness of policies.

I can disagree with their policies without engaging in personal attacks. I can make the case that they failed to avail the nation of the opportunity to address

pressing problems during this time of prosperity. Despite nearly a decade of uninterrupted economic growth, millions of Americans have been left behind under Clinton-Gore. The number of uninsured Americans has grown by eight million.

The education gap between disadvantaged inner-city students and their peers has grown wider since 1993. (The only state where this is not the case is Texas.) Thousands of American soldiers are on food stamps. When Congress sought to give relief by eliminating the marriage tax penalty, it was vetoed (despite the president having advocated such tax relief in a prior State of the Union Address).

Social Security and Medicare are in crisis, and the only solution forthcoming from the present administration is to pour more money into the program. Does not prudence suggest structural reforms first? Otherwise we are bailing water out of the ship without attempting to patch the hole.

The foregoing are my opinions—but only that. They are not God's. They are not the Bible's.

A critique can be made on other issues concerning the Republicans. No party is perfect, for truly only God is perfect. Some will point to big tobacco or the National Rifle Association as nefarious forces in the GOP—well, I'm one Republican elected official who has never taken money from either of them. (A review of campaign contribution records of Al Gore and the Democratic Party will show that Gore over the course of his career and other Democrats have taken money from both big tobacco and the National Rifle Association, even as recently as this year's Democratic Convention in Los Angeles, where the National Rifle Association underwrote at least one event.)

What, then, has God got to do with politics? Everything. Politics is how society shapes and metes out justice in the here and now. The private sector can do and must do much. But it cannot do everything. There is, therefore, a place for public intervention when markets break down. The Adventist Disaster Relief Agency and Adventist Community Services can do it alone without partnerships with government.

Unfortunately, the Bible doesn't tell Adventist Christians where and when to support government intervention and what form such intervention should take. This is messy business, but surely abandoning politics to the powerful cannot be God's will.

Therefore, involvement and engagement is the only appropriate response. It will take careful reflection and skillful implementation. It will take wisdom. It will take prayer.

It will also require that we focus on honest solutions rather than attacks. The Bible has no record of attack ads being coordinated by Joseph, Esther, and Daniel, though they were in fact the targets of vicious attacks.

We don't know whether these leaders would be Republicans or Democrats today. But we do know that they would strive to raise the level of public policy

discussion and that they would conduct themselves in a manner testifying that politics is and ought to be a vocation—a holy calling.

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Why I Shall Vote for George W. Bush

by Donald R. McAdams

I shall vote this November 7 for George W. Bush to be president of the United States. Does this have anything to do with the fact that I was raised an Adventist? I think not, but perhaps it does.

My father was a Democrat. My mother was a Republican. I was a Democrat from a young age. During my college years my hero was Hubert Humphrey. I voted for LBJ, Hubert Humphrey, George McGovern, and twice for Jimmy Carter. The only reluctant vote was for McGovern. I thought he was too liberal. I just couldn't make myself vote for Nixon.

During Ronald Reagan's first term I became a Republican. I had never voted a straight Democratic ticket before, and I have not voted a straight Republican ticket since. In fact, I have and will again this year hold receptions in my home for Democratic candidates.

But today I am a solid Republican. Why? Primarily because the Democratic Party changed. At least in my view, the Democratic Party turned away from vigorous opposition to Communism. America became as much responsible for the Cold War as the Soviet Union. Whatever went wrong in international affairs, Democrats wanted to blame America. Garbage, I thought. Meanwhile, Reagan set out to win the Cold War and did.

Also, it seemed to me that Democrats were increasingly intent on dividing the country into victims and victimizers. The Democrats of my early years championed the interests of working class Americans. Today's Democrats defend victims: racial victims, gender victims, sexual orientation victims, economic victims, pollution victims, victims of oil companies, pharmaceutical companies, and on and on. In this, the richest, freest, and most nondiscriminatory society since the world began, does victimology and class warfare make sense?

Lastly, today's Democrats seem to believe that Washington has the solution for every problem that faces every community, even every individual. State and local elected officials apparently are not smart enough or compassionate enough to solve local problems. And new entitlements are out there waiting to be discovered so that Washington can provide. What looks like civic compassion to many looks to me like pandering for votes with other people's money.

I know I have painted Democrats with broad strokes and harsh colors. I could do the same for Republicans—too many far right fanatics, too white, too fearful of international organizations, too often tolerant of discrimination, too often lacking in compassion, and much more. Both parties have their extremists. Both parties demagogue. Both parties have their share of rascals and saints.

But on balance, Republicans are more committed to the public policies that I believe are best for America: a foreign policy built around America's strategic interests, a strong national defense, free trade, limited government

with policy made as close as possible to the people, and government policies that focus more on creating opportunity than on providing benefits.

Opportunity is the key word. Freedom is what I value most of all. Real freedom, not freedom *from*, which is another way to say security, but freedom *to*. Civil society must provide both freedom and security, but I think the tilt should be toward freedom.

As I have grown older I have discovered that at heart I am a libertarian. I think I always was. But I am a practical libertarian, so I vote Republican.

Is there a link between my Adventist heritage and my libertarian leanings? Perhaps. I was very interested in religious liberty issues in my teens. If Sunday laws were enacted, could the Mark of the Beast be far behind? Government would lead the persecution in the Last Days. Might it not be smart to be fearful of government even now?

Still, I may be stretching the point. Maybe I was attracted to religious liberty because I was already a libertarian at heart. Maybe I became more Republican as I accumulated wealth (my children's explanation). Maybe, in the end, my mother's influence was stronger than my father's. Who knows?

What I do know is that I am sometimes a reluctant Republican. I am, however, a most enthusiastic supporter of George W. Bush. Maybe this is because I have seen up close how effectively he has brought Democrats and Republicans together to craft compromise legislation in the best interests of all Texans.

Maybe it is because I have seen his leadership for education reform. Maybe it is because I have seen him build bridges to Texans of color. Maybe it is because I know him personally as a man of intelligence, integrity, and vision with extraordinary leadership skills.

But even if I did not have this firsthand knowledge of Bush, I would be attracted by his policy proposals. At the heart of everyone is a belief that individual Americans can be trusted to make decisions for themselves. They can be trusted to keep more of the money they earn and spend it for what they value rather than for what government values. They can be trusted to manage some of their own Social Security investments. They can be trusted to work through faith-based organizations to meet many of the needs of their less fortunate fellow citizens. And if public schools fail to meet the needs of their children, they can be trusted to choose schools that will.

So, I shall vote for George W. Bush on November 7. Perhaps my Adventist heritage has nothing to do with this vote. I am sure my politics owe more to Thomas Jefferson than to Ellen White. Still, I grew up valuing freedom above all else. Whoever taught me this was an Adventist.

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I'm with Teddy Roosevelt and My Grandmother

by Roy Branson

I have spent delightful hours talking about public policy with Don McAdams and David Pendleton. I deeply respect both of them for devoting years of their lives to elected public service. But really, fel-

lows, when it comes to whom Adventists should support for president, the choice isn't even close. Just look at three specific issues.

First, Adventists are committed to preserving health and preventing disease, and have fought from the inception of their church for at least a reduction in alcohol and tobacco use. George W. Bush and his party have taken hundreds of thousands of dollars more than their opponents in contributions from the tobacco industry. Although legal, this industry aims its advertising at children. The result is that 90 percent of new smokers begin under the age of eighteen. Ultimately, over 400,000 people in the United States die each year from tobacco-related causes. Recently, Bush made a point of making a public pledge that if elected president he will stop a suit that the present administration has started against the tobacco companies. The Justice Department is suing to recover some medical costs that Medicare has had to pay for the care of people who suffer from tobacco-related illnesses.

Second, because of their commitment to preserving life, Adventists have historically frowned on their young members bearing arms—at least in the military—although they have not made it a test of fellowship. (Indeed, some Adventists have suffered imprisonment for this understanding of their faith.) As governor of Texas, however, George W. Bush, signed a bill that has made it easier to carry concealed weapons—even into church, if you are a minister of the gospel.

Third, Adventists have been raised on Ellen White's belief that nature is God's second book. George W. Bush canceled a state auto inspection program designed to cut smog, and signed a bill that allowed industries in Texas to cut pollution voluntarily. These actions have surely contributed to making Texas the worst or almost the worst of states for a wide range of toxic emissions. By now, we all know that Houston has become the smog capitol of the country, with America's highest incidence of childhood cancers.

On every one of these issues, Al Gore has gone in a different direction. Although he used to grow tobacco, he has become the fiercest opponent of Big Tobacco in the present administration. He fought for Senator John McCain's efforts in the Senate to make tobacco subject to regulation of the Food and

Drug Administration, just as it regulates every other drug. Gore favors raising taxes on tobacco, one of the most effective ways to decrease teen smoking, and supported launching the federal suit against the tobacco companies to recover tobacco-related Medicare costs.

Far from falling in step with the National Rifle Association (NRA) program to expand laws that permit one legally to carry concealed weapons, Gore supports at least incrementally greater regulation of guns: mandatory background checks on those who purchase guns and mandatory child safety locks. His White House would not be a place out of which the NRA could work.

In the area of the environment, where Gore has been given wide responsibility during the last eight years to implement federal laws and regulations, U.S. air and water pollution has declined sharply. Toxic emissions have fallen, acid rain has declined, tens of millions of acres of forest and pristine land have acquired preservation status, and animals such as the bald eagle and brown pelican have come off the endangered species list—all of this during a time of record economic boom.

As I was growing up, all of us in my Adventist preacher's family thought of themselves as progressive Republicans. Grandmother Bessie, a lifelong Adventist and denominational worker, never got over her loyalty to Teddy Roosevelt, who brought in food and drug regulation, fought the big financial interests, and protected the environment. In this election, just looking at the issues, I think I know for whom she and the rest of my family would have voted. (That's not even considering that Al Gore cared enough about his faith to study theology for a year, and chose a conscientious Sabbath keeper to be his vice president!) Disagree with me if you want, but shame on you, Don and Dave, for not going along with Grandmother Bessie.

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What Would Jesus Do?

by Aubyn Fulton

The Bible is not a political handbook, anymore than a science textbook; there are no directives in Scripture to vote for either Democrats or Republicans. However, the Bible does describe basic principles of the Kingdom. At the beginning of his ministry Jesus nicely summarized them this way: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4: 18-19, NIV).

It is easy to use these principles to decide for whom not to vote: those not committed to social justice policies that improve the living conditions of the poor, reduce circumstances that lead to crime and crowded prisons, increase access to quality health care, and improve the lot of the oppressed.

Based on these biblical principles, it is clear that I will not be voting for either Pat Buchanan or George W. Bush this fall. Both candidates have a long record of pursuing policies that do not strengthen and expand the principles of the Kingdom. Whether it is tax policies that favor the wealthy, opposition to increases in the minimum wage, advocacy for oppressive big businesses like the gun, tobacco, and oil industries, or opposition to universal health care, both Buchanan and Bush have demonstrated that they are not committed to the Christian duty to stand up for the oppressed.

Over the years I have learned to tolerate the conservative politics of so many of my Adventist friends and realize that they, too, believe (however mistakenly) that their political choices are in harmony with the gospel. I now understand that reasonable people—and committed Christians—can honestly disagree on the best means to pursue social justice.

However, I still believe that the principles of Jesus require us to support politicians who are most likely to speak for the poor and oppressed against the entrenched interests of the wealthy and powerful, and work to make diversity—not division—the basis of our unity. By these criteria George W. Bush and the current Republican Party he represents fail miserably.

I find it more difficult to use biblical principles to decide whom I should vote for. Although Al Gore would clearly be more likely than George W. Bush to support the social justice policies I believe are mandated by the gospel, he, too, is beholden to large oppressive corporate interests. Many self-appointed Christian leaders have loudly attacked the Clinton administration for the president's personal moral lapses. Unfortunately, they have overlooked the much more important (from a biblical perspective) lapses in the Clinton/Gore administration's willingness to take advantage of relative prosperity to make some fundamental structural improvements in economic and social justice.

Of the four men currently running for president, Ralph Nadar probably comes closest to advocating the kind of good news for the poor and oppressed that Jesus identified as the core of his own ministry. Nadar has shown that he is willing and able to stand up to the oppressive corporate interests and to speak truth to the powerful.

Nevertheless, I will be voting for Al Gore and volunteering in his campaign to encourage others to do so as well. The serpent's wisdom discussed in the Bible suggests that, because Nadar has no chance of winning the vote, the most likely course to result in real, if relatively small, progress toward the biblical agenda of social justice is to cast a vote for Gore and against Bush. Pursuit of biblical principles in politics, as in so many other areas of life, is an imperfect work in progress.

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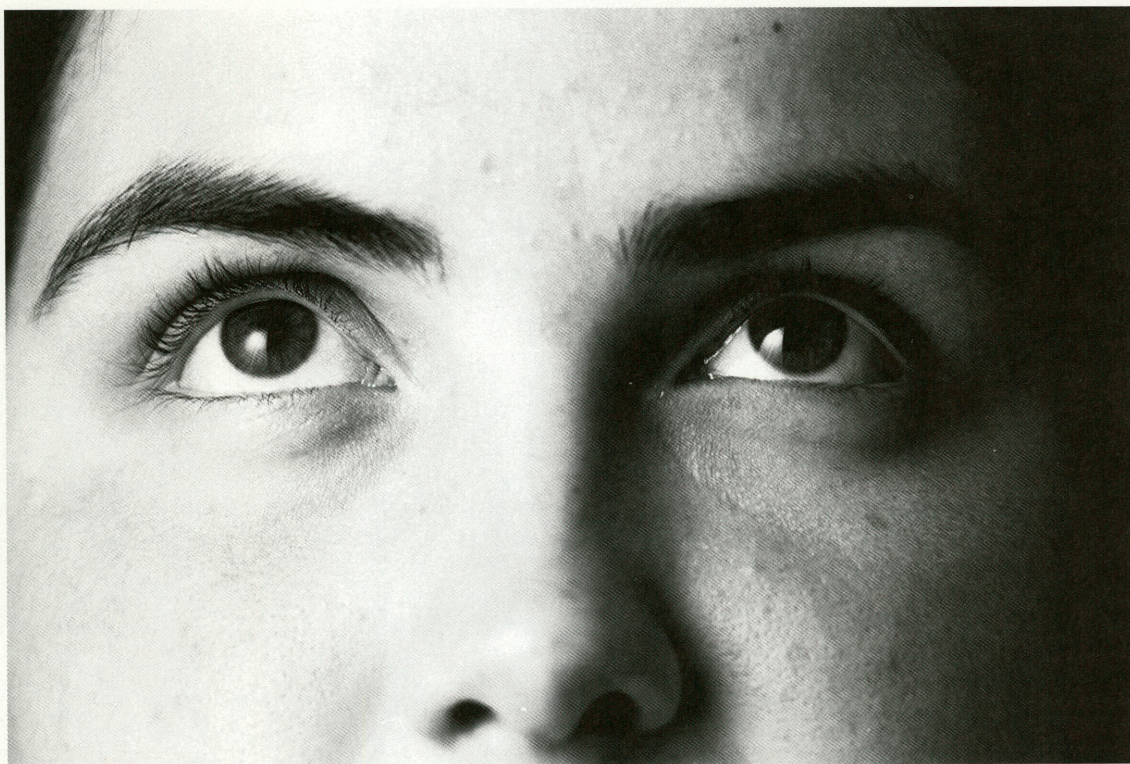


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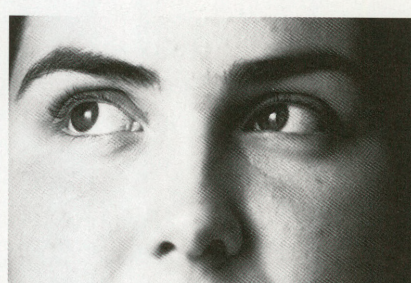
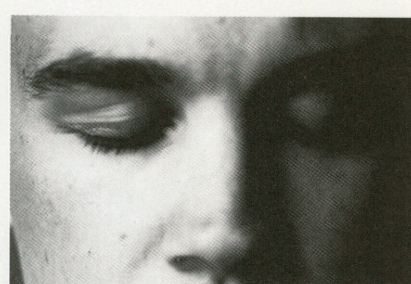
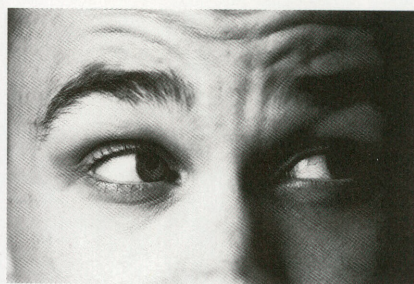
The Politics of Aging

Has the Church Jeopardized Its Future by Marginalizing Its Youth?

by Ron Osborn

Extolling the importance of youth has become a regular feature at General Conference sessions. Similar to his predecessor in 1995, within hours of his election at the 2000 General Conference Session in Toronto, President Jan Paulsen, 65, issued a clarion call for greater inclusion of youth in the business of the Church. "We've been accustomed to experienced hands doing it all," said Paulsen in an interview with *Adventist Review* editor William Johnsson. "Today in many countries, 70 to 75 percent of our membership are less than thirty-five years of age. Clearly these people are not the leadership in waiting, they are the ones who must take a creative part in the life of the church today."¹

Although these and a host of similar statements made by senior administrators in recent years suggest that the Church is earnestly pursuing a bold, youth-oriented course for the future, the evidence from Toronto tells a different tale.



Photos: Thomas Osborn

Without challenging the apparent goodwill of church officials, I would like to raise some potentially thorny questions concerning age and the political structure of the Church. In particular, I would like to ask church leaders: What does the proliferation of statements, sermons, and speeches about “armies of rightly trained youth” reveal in view of the fact that young Adventists (those under the age of thirty for the purposes of this article) have been effectively barred from having a representative voice within the Church?

Theory versus Practice: The Rhetoric of Inclusion

To begin, it will be helpful to put the current situation in historical perspective. A survey of the official minutes from early General Conference sessions reveals that a significant concern among Seventh-day Adventist founders during the period 1863-88 was how to include younger members in the work of the fledgling movement. “[W]e regret the lack of a missionary spirit among our people,” a typical resolution from the time reads, “and [we resolve to] encourage proper men and women, *especially the young*, to consecrate themselves to the work of God; not simply as ministers and lecturers, but as helpers in the various departments of the cause” (emphasis added).²

Thus, present calls for increased youth involvement, as well as the underlying sentiment that new approaches must be adopted to retain young adults in

the Church, are as old as the General Conference itself. Youth, evidently, are a perennial problem.

However, there have been some significant demographic changes within the Church over the past 140 years that should be noted. In 1863, barely 14 percent of General Conference delegates were over the age of fifty.³ In 2000, by contrast, almost half were. Correspondingly, in the first sixty years of General Conference meetings, seven out of ten of the Church’s presidents were under the age of fifty at the time of their election, whereas over the past sixty years only one out of nine have been.⁴

The disparity in age between early and present church leaders is even more apparent when one considers the composition of the 262-member Executive Committee in Toronto, the body that exercises the greatest political influence and authority in the Church. At this year’s session, 74 percent of the members were over the age of fifty, with only fifteen people under forty and just one under thirty.

To the extent, then, that the executive officers control the business of the Church, set the parameters of discussion on administrative and theological issues, and chart church policy, it would be fair to say that youth representation is so negligible as to be of zero consequence.

Still, the most glaring illustration of the Church’s seeming indifference to the voices of its younger members was evidenced not in the Executive Committee, but in the delegation from the North American Division. Although it sent the fourth largest delegation to the session (179 members) the North

Table 1
Delegation by Age Group*

Entity Name	Under 30	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70+	Total
Africa-Indian Ocean Division	0	21	82	44	9	1	127
Eastern African Division	3	30	93	38	11	0	175
Euro-Africa Division	5	26	52	28	8	0	119
Euro-Asia Division	5	17	29	10	2	2	65
GC ADCOM/Institutions/Services	0	2	23	25	19	5	74
GC Dept. Associate Directors	0	2	4	10	9	2	27
GC Executive Committee	1	14	54	100	83	10	262
GC Office Appointed Staff	0	4	7	13	10	0	34
Inter-American Division	6	28	100	56	17	3	210
North American Division	0	7	44	93	33	2	179
Northern Asia-Pacific Division	1	8	12	24	12	5	62
South American Division	2	23	94	56	14	4	193
South Pacific Division	9	11	27	18	7	0	72
Southern Africa Union	0	3	7	5	4	0	19
Southern Asia Division	2	3	37	29	4	1	76
Southern Asia-Pacific Division	5	21	51	48	12	1	138
Trans-European Division	10	12	30	23	9	0	84
Total	49	232	746	620	263	36	1946

*As of April 20, 2000. From "Delegation Composition Report," *Adventist Review*, June 30, 2000, 37.

"Today, in many countries, 70 to 75 percent of our membership are less than 35 years of age." —Jan Paulsen

Table 2
Delegation Composition Report*

Entity Name	Lait	Pastor/Tchr. Nonadmin.	Admin.	Gen. Conf. Comm.	Total	Male	Female
Africa-Indian Ocean Division	46	43	68	0	157	134	23
Eastern African Division	46	61	69	0	175	151	24
Euro-Africa Division	31	27	61	0	119	108	11
Euro-Asia Division	18	14	33	0	65	58	7
GC ADCOM/Institutions/Services	16	19	39	0	74	56	18
GC Dept. Associate Directors	0	27	0	0	27	21	6
GC Executive Committee	0	0	0	262	262	236	26
GC Office Appointed Staff	0	34	0	0	34	27	7
Inter-American Division	58	58	94	0	210	168	42
North American Division	48	43	88	0	179	137	42
Northern Asia-Pacific Division	13	34	15	0	62	54	8
South American Division	37	64	92	0	193	176	17
South Pacific Division	20	28	24	0	72	56	16
Southern Africa Union	3	1	14	1	19	14	5
Southern Asia Division	19	24	33	0	76	65	11
Southern Asia-Pacific Division	43	42	53	0	138	115	23
Trans-European Division	28	29	27	0	84	69	15
Total	425	548	710	263	1946	1645	301

*As of April 20, 2000. From "Delegation Composition Report," *Adventist Review*, June 30, 2000, 37.

Table 3¹
Divisions Ranked by How Well They Represented Youth, Women, and Laity

Delegations from best to worst on 3-36 point scale ²	Average Age ³	% Women	Ratio of Laypersons to Administrators
1. South Pacific (7)	45.4	28.5	1:1.2
2. Trans-European (9)	46.1	21.7	1:0.96
3. Inter-America (15)	47.7	25	1:1.6
4. South Asia-Pacific (16)	48.2	20	1:1.2
5. Africa-India Ocean (17)	47.8	20	1:1.5
6. Eastern Africa (18)	46.4	15.9	1:1.5
7. Euro-Asia (19)	43.9	12	1:1.8
8. North American (21)	53.8	30.7	1:1.8
9. North Asia-Pacific (22)	53.5	14.8	1:1.1
10. Euro-Africa (23)	45.7	10	1:2.0
11. Southern Asia (24)	49.3	16.9	1:1.7
12. South America (31)	48.6	9.6	1:2.5

¹ Adapted from "Delegation Composition Report," *Adventist Review*, June 30, 2000, 37.

² Based upon the rank numbers of each division in the categories of youth, gender representation, and lay representation added together, with the lowest score being "best" and the highest "worst."

³ Based upon the number of delegates in each age category multiplied by the means of each grouping. (The mean of the 30-39 age group would be 35; the mean of the 40-49 group would be 45, etc.) Delegates under the age of 30 were counted as being 25 based on a random sample of 25 members of the group. Delegates over the age of 70 were counted as being 75.

"Under the Church's present constitution, there is nothing to suggest that youth will be adequately represented at future G.C. sessions."

American Division sent merely seven individuals (roughly 3 percent) under the age of forty, and not a single delegate under the age of thirty.

"If this is true, it was clearly a case of inexcusable oversight," said one incredulous young adult observer from North America when shown the facts. Other young Adventists were less charitable. "I'm really disappointed in the division," said Andy Nash, age twenty-nine, of Lincoln, Nebraska. "Young adults in North America have worked hard the past several years to revitalize the Church here. The fact is, young leaders like Shasta Burr, Allan Martin, and Adam Rose would not only be excellent delegates, but excellent administrators. They would bring vision and energy to a division that's low on both."

The world church as a whole, however, did little better than the North American Division. Out of the entire two thousand-member body, those under thirty—representing an estimated 70 percent of actual Adventist membership—comprised little more than 2 percent of the session's voting members, or forty-nine individuals. (See Table 1.⁵)

Statements about allowing "young people to reshape and restate" the Church; about vast number[s] of highly educated, beautiful young people" poised en masse to finish the gospel commission; and about youth "on the march for Christ and to Zion" (all speeches delivered during the session)⁶ thus belie a glaring fact: that when it comes to matters of official policy and belief, youth at present have little if any voice in their church.

Separate and Unequal:

Where Young Adventists May Be

Seen and Heard

Although young Adventists were not given a representative voice as delegates at the Toronto session, it would be inaccurate to conclude that they are not active within the Church, or that there have not been positive efforts over the past several years on behalf of the Church's younger members.

The recent Net '98 evangelistic campaign attempted to put a more contemporary face on traditional Adventist theology and outreach; meetings and conferences organized by young Adventists across North America, such as GenX in 1998 and Connexions, in 1999, have received recognition and

encouragement from some church leaders; and the establishment of various youth ministries and publications, such as *View Magazine*, have drawn attention to the positive contributions being made by young Adventists around the world.

In North America these contributions over the past year have included the services of more than 1,433 volunteers who fulfilled one-year commitments with ADRA International, Maranatha International, Task Force Missions, International Student Missions, Adventist Frontier Missions, Student Health Ministries, and a diversity of other service-oriented programs. An additional 24,975 Adventist youth served in various capacities as short-term YouthNet volunteers.⁷

In Toronto, too, there was evidence that young Adventists are seeking ways to remain engaged in the life and mission of the Church. On the first Sabbath of the week, a young adult worship service was arranged with seating for 1,300 persons. However, almost twice as many people arrived as could be seated. The following week the service was moved into a hall with seating for 5,000.

During the ten-day General Conference Session, while official delegates spent hours parsing words such as "abandon," approximately three hundred young adults met daily to distribute food to homeless persons and conduct street evangelistic efforts that incorporated music, drama, preaching, and the distribution of literature. The group, known as Impact Toronto, was highlighted during the afternoon program in the SkyDome on the second Sabbath of the session.

Clearly, then, young Adventists are visible in many areas of church life. They may in fact be some of the Church's most visible members, maintaining the "front-lines" of service and nonmedia evangelism through programs like Impact Toronto, Student Missions, and Adventist Volunteers. Fifty-five-year-olds, it goes without saying, do not generally suspend their careers and move to remote villages or depressed neighborhoods for the cause of mission; twenty-two-year-olds routinely do.

Yet in a sense, the *visibility* of young Adventists in these areas, positive as it may be, merely serves to illustrate the point: namely, that youth do not have a real *voice* in the Church. "The Church doesn't like confrontation," said Mirna Karam, a twenty-nine-year-old observer from Lebanon who attended the session. "I don't feel they are exempting the youth altogether. But in sessions like this where they are discussing the *Church Manual* and things like divorce

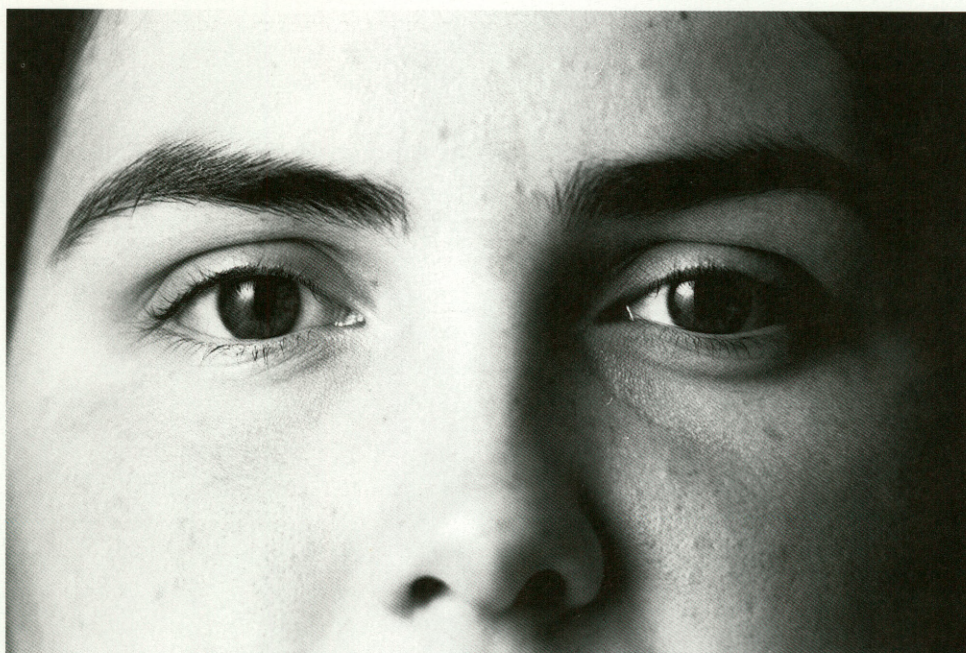


Photo: Thomas Osborn

youth to engage in acts of service and ministry without necessarily engaging in much critical thought or discussion. "[I'm] tired of just theory," said Mark Baines, a young adult from Australia who distributed bread in Toronto. "[T]his is practical, hands-on. It's good to 'get your hands dirty.'"⁹

But if a theory of Christianity divorced from Christ-like actions poses one danger to the Adventist community, an equally unhealthy church would include a flurry of

and remarriage and the age for baptism and all these different things that they want to change or fix, they think that the young people are here to learn but not to take part."

In her home conference, Karam reported, the Church has sponsored numerous programs and activities for youth, but none that would prepare them to assume positions of leadership. "They only touched on things like community service," she said, "things that are strictly for the youth."

It may thus be acceptable for youth to devote themselves to mission work in remote or exotic locations; it may be acceptable for youth to pass out sandwiches and clothing to homeless persons on street corners; it may be acceptable for youth to organize their own separate rallies, conferences, and spiritual retreats. It may even be acceptable for youth to perform the special music for Sabbath worship (provided the music does not involve percussive instruments or lead to any errant expressive movements).⁸

But beyond the conference constituency level, no provision has been made for the representation of younger Adventists in regard to matters of doctrine, theology, policy, or church administration. In other words, when it comes to discussing the things that "really count," the old adage holds true: children are to be seen but not heard—never mind the fact that young adults are not children.

It is true that many young Adventists, impatient with any form of political process or theological discussion, prefer this arrangement, which encourages

enthusiastic though unreflective and uncritical activity performed in Christ's name—activity divorced from substantive church dialogue or decision making.

Songs, skits, and sandwiches may be important and visible applications of the gospel. However, young Adventists who are concerned about the Church as a corporate and political body will not find satisfaction in these officially sanctioned, separate spheres of youth activity unless they also feel truly represented and engaged in the life of the Church as a whole.

This implies not only the presence of young delegates at future General Conference sessions, but also the inclusion of young Adventists in positions of genuine leadership and responsibility at conference, union, division, and General Conference levels.

Rewarding versus Representing: Let Us Not Praise Famous Men

Unfortunately, under the Church's present constitution there is nothing to suggest that youth will be adequately represented at future General Conference sessions; for, although the constitution implicitly embraces the principle of representative government, there are no safeguards within the document to ensure that such representation actually occurs.

In practice, delegates are tapped to attend sessions either as a reward for years of service, because they have money and therefore influence, or in

recognition of professional standing within the institutional hierarchy. There is only token representation of ordinary lay members who comprise the majority of the Church's population—unless, that is, one accepts the kind of Orwellian doublethink exemplified by a middle-aged male delegate at the 1995 session in Utrecht: "I represent devout young people, particularly young women of my division," he declared, introducing a stump speech against women's ordination.¹⁰

Yet even if Adventists fully embraced the notion of vicarious representation through a priesthood of senior male elites, the session in Toronto failed by the minimal standard of representation required: the standard of the Church's own constitution.

Beyond giving only 2 percent of delegate positions to persons under age thirty, and only 15 percent to women, a majority of the divisions violated the Church's working policy by failing to send the proper quota of lay members to the session—a fact that has direct bearing on the youth question because young Adventists are overwhelmingly laypersons.

According to article four, section eight of the church constitution: "In the selection of regular delegates and delegates-at-large, organizations shall choose Seventh-day Adventists in regular standing, at least 50 percent of whom shall be laypersons, pastors, teachers, and nonadministrative employees, of both genders, and representing a range of age groups and nationalities." Further, the article declares, "*The majority of the above 50 percent shall be laypersons*" (emphasis added).¹¹

Eastern Africa Division, Northern Asia-Pacific Division, South America Division, South Pacific Division, Southern Asia Division, and Trans-European Division sent more pastors and teachers than laity. Therefore, they failed to comply with the final clause of this policy. As a result, there were 468 pastors, teachers, and nonadministrative personnel sent from the various divisions to the session, but only 409 laypersons—considerably less than half of the combined total stipulated under the constitution. (See Table 2.¹² The figures 468 and 409 do not include the four different GC delegations.)

For students of correct parliamentary procedure,

this leads to an intriguing (though admittedly facetious) question: Should the 2000 General Conference Session be declared null and void?

To a large extent, the problem of representation could be easily remedied. A conscious effort on the part of administrators to include young adults, as well as women and laypersons in general, would go a long way toward making future General Conference sessions diverse in more than the number of flags on the podium.

Two divisions should be commended for having already taken significant steps in this direc-

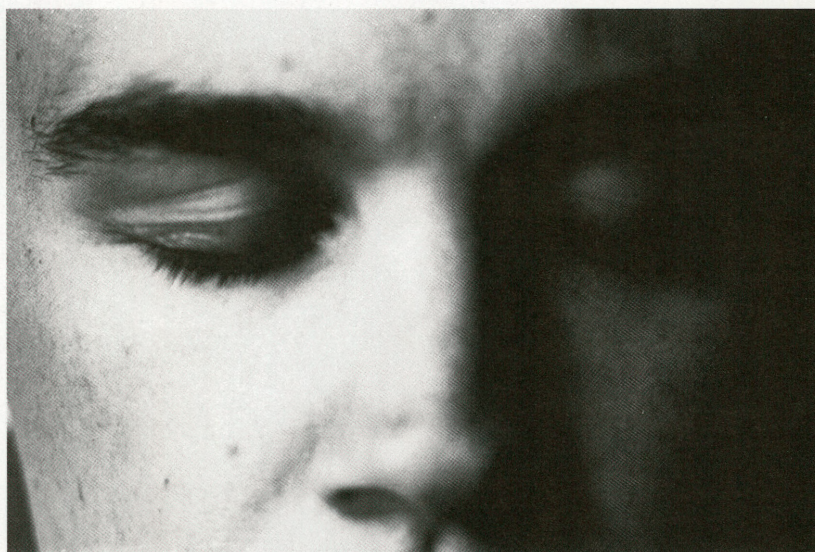


Photo: Thomas Osborn

tion. South Pacific Division and Trans-European Division, with a combined total of 156 delegates, sent more representatives to Toronto under thirty than the Church's six largest divisions (Inter-America, South America, North America, Eastern Africa, Africa-India Ocean, and South-Asia Pacific) combined. They also had extremely low layperson to administrator ratios, and two of the highest percentages of female delegates (28.5 percent for the South Pacific Division and 21.7 percent for the Trans-European Division).

South America Division, by contrast, sent a whopping 2.5 administrators for every lay member, and a mere 9.6 percent female delegates. Although boasting one of the youngest divisions in the world, South American Division delegates were also on average two years older than their South Pacific Division and Trans-European Division counterparts. (See Table 3.)

Such dramatic differences between delegates from the South Pacific Division and the Trans-

European Division on the one hand and the South American Division delegation on the other, suggests that representation happens—or fails to happen—largely as a result of the choices made by church leaders. When division and union officials are sensitive to the need for youth, female, and lay voices, they are capable of sending a diverse delegation. When, for cultural or political reasons, they are indifferent on the matter, it should come as no surprise that the delegations they serve up are studies in blandness.

Risks and Opportunities: Why the Church Cannot Afford to Disenfranchise Its Youth

In some areas of church life there is a great deal of attention given to matters of representation. Unfortunately, this attention revolves almost solely around issues of national, racial, and ethnic difference. The categories of age and gender—which cut across distinctions of race, culture, and class—meanwhile receive little more than token concessions by church leaders of all ethnic and racial backgrounds.

This is both cause for alarm and reason for hope. It is cause for alarm because disenfranchised young Adventists will become increasingly cynical and apathetic toward their church. A lack of representation within the institutional framework may thus be the catalyst for many youth leaving Adventism altogether. In this sense, the need for political representation of young Adventists contains an urgency that goes beyond any purely political calculation.

However, there are seeds of possibility in the present situation. I do not share in the romanticized view of youth frequently expressed by church leaders and sometimes by youth themselves: we are not the salvation of the Church, and the wisdom and experience of older Adventists remains critical to the Church's health and mission. Still, I believe that many young Adventists possess gifts of energy and openness that would greatly help the Church as it strives to attain genuine community—community that overcomes barriers of race, class, and gender, as well as age.

The Church is thus faced with one choice. It can either continue to marginalize its younger members and by so doing jeopardize its future. Or it can take

can take the risky, even agonizing, steps necessary to ensure that the rhetoric of inclusion is at last grounded in reality.

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1. "A Conversation With Jan Paulsen," *Adventist Review*, July 2, 2000, 4.
2. Minutes of the General Conference Session, Feb. 7, 1871, res. 9, Online Archives of the Seventh-day Adventist Church <www.archives.gc.adventist.org/AST/archives>.
3. The names of six of the twenty delegates from the 1863 session do not appear in the obituaries of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The percentage used here is therefore based on the ages of the other fourteen delegates as a representative sample. See Minutes of the General Conference Session, 1863; and Obituary Index of the Archives of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.
4. James White and George Butler both served multiple nonconsecutive terms. The seven out of ten figure for the 1863-1922 period thus counts each of these terms as separate presidencies.
5. Although the delegation lists underwent slight changes during the course of the session, the basic demographic makeup of the various delegations is accurately reflected in the table "Delegation By Age Group," *Adventist Review*, June 30, 2000, 36.
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Photo: Thomas Osborn

Why Our Teenagers Leave the Church

by Roger L. Dudley

“I am frustrated with the Church. . . . I have lost my faith in the Adventist organization.” “The members in my church were so cold. . . . I had stopped attending for two years.” “The Adventist Church tends to be the opposite of Christ.” “I feel that the Church is a farce.”

Whatever theological, cultural, or lifestyle differences Adventists have, they pretty much agree on one thing: they want their children to commit to the religious values that they themselves have embraced and found important. Although many youth do follow in their parents' footsteps and remain in the Church—even though

ALIENATION

"I would rather spend Sabbath on my own than try to carve out a place in ice." "The people were very cold and aloof, not just toward other members but toward some guests as well."

Table 1
**Regression of First Year Variables
on Remaining a Member**

Step	Variable	Beta*
1	Intend to remain an active Adventist when out on own	.159
2	Mother attends church frequently	.152
3	More years in an Adventist day academy	.106
4	Father attends church frequently	.091
5	Pray personally more frequently	.077
6	Agree with Adventist standards on dancing/discos	.074
7	Worship with family more frequently	.062
8	Years in Pathfinders (like Scouts)	.054

*First six betas significant beyond .01 level; 7 and 8 significant beyond .05 level

their religion may be expressed somewhat differently than that of the older generation—an increasing number appear to be abandoning parental values and leaving the Church.

Concerned with this attrition, denominational leaders commissioned the Institute of Church Ministry at Andrews University to study the extent of the problem and the reasons why young people either leave the Church or remain in it.

The Project

Thus began a project that followed a large division-wide sample of teenagers for ten years. Given time for organizing the study, arranging for funding, doing a thorough literature review, collecting the data, analyzing the results, and writing the book, the task has occupied much of my attention for sixteen years, though I have had many helpers in this project. This research has special significance in that we have not been able to find any other denominational study that followed a large, representative, binational sample of teenagers every year for ten years.

The data-collecting phase of this project began in 1987 under the authorization of the North American Division (NAD) of Seventh-day Adventists, which financed the entire study. Using a stratified-random method, the project selected 695 churches in order to represent proportionately the Adventist membership in the NAD. Then the clerk of each church was asked to send the names and addresses of all young people who were either fifteen or sixteen years old and who were members of that congregation. After five months of follow-up, clerks of 659 churches (95 percent)

responded. The teenagers on these lists were sent a base questionnaire and invited by letter to participate in a long-term relationship. After weeding out those who were not actually members or who were not in the target age group, the project received 1,523 usable surveys.

Each year, members of this group were mailed a questionnaire, which included recurrent and new items. Over time, some participants moved, and current addresses were not always available. Others chose to discontinue participation in the project. Each year every effort was made to locate as many participants as possible, the project sending up to five mailings per year to nonrespondents and telephoning churches and families in an attempt to find current addresses.

The number of respondents for which we have data varied from year to year. However, at the cutoff of data collection in the autumn of 1997, 783 young adults had returned the tenth-year questionnaire. These 783 "survivors" represent about 51 percent of the original sample (1,523) that began in 1987—quite remarkable after ten years. However, if we delete from

IRRELEVANCE

"I feel I get more out of religious discussions with my friends than I do out of church." "I felt the church offered nothing to me personally."

the pool those for whom no valid addresses are known and those who requested to be dropped from the sample—a total of 311—because they never received the tenth survey and, therefore, could not fill it out, 1,212 *potential* respondents are left, making a return rate of about 65 percent.

slightly over half the original sample, it was necessary to estimate the loss from the information we did have. We used several projection methods and concluded that between 40 and 50 percent of those teenagers who were baptized members of Adventist churches in North America have either officially dropped off the

The Report

This project has yielded data on hundreds of variables, as well as scores of personal letters. No one report could begin to deal with the total picture. However, my recent book is an attempt to distill the information that would seem most crucial for youth ministry.¹ The book is composed of three main types of information: (1) analyses of questionnaire data in an attempt to discover what factors in adolescence predict relationships to the Church in mid-twenties adults; (2) analyses of comments written by the young adults to discover themes for dropping out, staying in, or returning, as well as those things most positive and most disturbing about the Church and suggestions for designing the ideal church; and (3) case studies in which a young person typical of a certain type of experience is followed through the entire ten-year period to observe changes and what influences him or her.

Variables Included

In this brief paper we can look at only a few relationships drawn from the first type of analysis described above. One purpose was to discover the extent of the Church's loss of its young adults. Because status vis-à-vis the Church in the tenth year was available for only

membership roles or become completely inactive by their mid-twenties.

More importantly, we wished to discover what influences during the teenage years predict which young people will continue in the Church and which ones will not. We had collected many variables on the first survey. These independent, or predictor, variables can be grouped under several categories: home influences, parochial versus public education, congregational involvement, lifestyle standards, and devotional practices.

In order to predict what may happen in the lives of teenagers, we also needed to decide on our outcome measures. There were a number of measures we could have used, but we chose three that seem central to our research: (1) whether or not the young



Photo: Thomas Osborn

INTOLERANCE

The idea of church being a place for sinners to come is a fantasy. Judgment is passed on you if you are perceived to be a sinner."

adult is still a member of the Church at the time of his/her last report, (2) whether or not the young adult attends worship services regularly, and (3) whether or not the young adult has ever dropped out of church membership or stopped attending for a time. Taken together, these three measures give us a fair basis to predict retention or dropout. We will begin with membership status.

whatever, and the subject claimed to be a member still, we cannot tell if that person dropped out before the end of the tenth year. Therefore, this method probably overestimates the number of members and thus reduces the probabilities of significant findings. The opposite may also be true. Some who last reported themselves out of the Church may have returned without letting us know, an unlikely possibility. So it is likely that these findings are conservative, but still we found twenty-five significant predictors for determining whether or not someone remains a member.

Obviously, much overlapping variance occurred among these items, so we submitted these predictors to a stepwise multiple regression analysis in order to determine the predictive value of each when controlled for all the other independent variables. The analysis selected eight predictors with a multiple *R* of approximately .40, which ex-

plained around 16 percent of the variance in membership status and was significant beyond the .001 level.² In each table the beta weights³ are for the final step of the analysis.

In Table 1, we note that the teenagers' statement that they intend to remain in the Church when out on their own is the best predictor in our set of who will actually still be in the Church ten years later. We also notice the powerful influence of the religious family as shown in items 2, 4, and 7. The example of mother and father and the sharing of family faith together constitute the most important environment in affecting the future of those who come from such homes.

Parochial education, especially in the crucial decision-making period of adolescence, is also an important shaper of adulthood, as also shown in Table 1. Personal devotions help develop character in teenagers that will result in future faithfulness. I take

Table 2
**Regression of First Year Variables
on Regular Church Attendance**

Step	Variable	Beta*
1	Intend to remain an active Adventist when out on own	.136
2	Mother attends church frequently	.112
3	Agree that Adventist standards/rules are reasonable	.094
4	Worship with family more frequently	.084

*All betas significant beyond .01 level

Remaining a Member

It was no problem to determine if the 783 subjects who completed the tenth-year questionnaire were still members because we asked them that question. However, what about the 740 who did not fill out the last survey? Because we asked the membership question each year, we decided to take their answer for the last year in which they completed a questionnaire. Doing so gave us 1,351 subjects who stated whether or not they were still members. We could not use the 172 who never replied after the opening year and who were, by definition, members at the beginning of the study.

It will be obvious that this method has a weakness. If the last year was the third, sixth, ninth, or

CONVENIENCE

"I stopped coming to church because I have to get up early on weekends. Why can't there be an afternoon service?"

item 6 to represent agreement with Adventist lifestyle standards in general. That is, so much overlap occurs in agreement on movies, music, jewelry, and dancing that only one of those could be included in the predictive package. I also take Pathfinder membership to represent all the items on congregational involvement.

Regular Church Attendance

The second outcome measure is the response to the question of how frequently the young adult attends worship services at church. Because the question was asked almost every year, we followed the same practice as above in using the answer from the last survey returned. We found eighteen significant predictors for regular attendance in middle adulthood. When these were submitted to multiple regression, four variables were selected with a multiple *R* of .28, which explain 8 percent of the variance, significant beyond the .001 level (Table 2).

Three out of the four selections also appeared in the list of predictors for remaining a member, which emphasizes how closely these two outcome measures (membership and attendance) are related. The fourth step, reasonableness of Adventist lifestyle standards, may cover the same ground as agreement with the standard on dancing found in the previous list.

Dropping Out

The third outcome measure is based on responses to the question: "Did you ever, at some time in the past, drop out of church membership or stop attending services?" This query is, in some ways, the reverse of

the question on whether or not the respondent belongs to the Church. But it refers to a past action, not a present status. Some may have dropped out and later returned. Others may have essentially left the Church but officially remained as members. Furthermore, because the question was asked in this form only in years eight and ten, we have information on only 862 subjects. Although fifteen variables were significant in bivariate relationships, only three steps were selected in the regression analysis (Table 3). These three have a multiple *R* of .33 and explain 11

Table 3
**Regression of First Year Variables
on Dropping out of Church**

Step	Variable	Beta*
1	Biological parents married and together	.195
2	Worship with family more frequently	.172
3	Intend to remain an active Adventist when out on own	.131

*All betas significant beyond .01 level

percent of the variance in dropping out, significant beyond the .001 level.

In Table 3, the second and third items were also predictors both of remaining a member of the Church and continuing to attend worship services regularly. They deserve primary emphasis in the total picture. However, another item is the strongest predictor of dropping out when the other variables are controlled. Having parents who are still together is the best insurance that a young person will not drop out of the faith fellowship. When this is combined with family worship, we can see that strong families are key to retention of the youth. Building and maintaining such families should be a major task of religious communities.

"THE REASONS FOR DROPPING OUT OF CHURCH SEEM TO BE HIGHLY INTERRELATED. THOSE WHO CHOOSE TO DISCONNECT PERCEIVE THE CHURCH AS IRRELEVANT BECAUSE THEY SENSE THEY ARE UNACCEPTED AND THEIR NEEDS ARE NEGLECTED. THEY ALSO FEEL UNACCEPTED BECAUSE THEY DON'T DISCERN THEIR CHURCH AS ATTEMPTING TO PROVIDE THEM WITH RELEVANT AND TARGETED PROGRAMMING. THE INCONVENIENCE OF WAKING UP EARLY ON SABBATH MORNING IS ANOTHER INDICATOR THAT THE CHURCH IS OBLIVIOUS TO THE REALITY OF THEIR LIVES. THIS COMBINED WITH VARIOUS PERSONAL ISSUES AND A HIGH DISTASTE AND DISAPPOINTMENT WITH PERCEIVED INTOLERANCE, HYPOCRISY AND CONDEMNATION HAVE ESTRANGED YOUNG ADULTS FROM THEIR CHURCH."

- ROGER L. DUDLEY

Some Positive Directions

How then can churches or other religious bodies slow the rate of dropout? Several areas stand out clearly:

1. Encourage solid religious homes where parents set a good example and families worship together. Adolescents whose biological families remain intact, whose father and mother both attend church frequently, and who participate in family worship are more likely to remain committed to the family faith when they reach adulthood.

2. Provide a solid program of religious education, especially in the first ten grades. Data taken from the study but not shown in this paper reveal that Adventist education predicts church retention.*

3. Get young people involved in the life and activities of their congregations. Many of the written comments centered on this theme. Attachment theory is consistent with the finding that young people who are drawn early into congregational life, given significant responsibilities, and experience warm relationships with the adult members tend to remain active in their own adult years.

4. Decide which lifestyle standards are crucial to the faith community and present them in ways that youth will see them as worthwhile and can be supportive of them.

5. Foster a strong devotional life in young people, demonstrating how to make personal prayer and the study of Scripture rich and meaningful.

6. Encourage families to worship together in ways that are satisfying and meaningful.

7. Do everything possible to help youth gain a positive view of the congregation and the larger

denomination while still in their early teens. Cognitive consistency theory helps to explain why those who as teenagers stated their plans to remain Adventists when they reached adulthood were actually more likely to do so—one of the strongest findings in the research. Young people who early make a declaration of purpose reduce dissonance by resisting distractions and honoring those commitments.

Making this picture a reality everywhere in homes, schools, and congregations presents the best hope for a future Seventh-day Adventist Church that includes the new generation.

Notes and References

1. Roger L. Dudley, *Why Our Teenagers Leave the Church: Personal Stories From a 10-Year Study* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald, 2000).

2. Just as r is used in statistics to indicate the coefficient of correlation between two variables (which range from -1 to +1), so R represents the correlation between a single variable and a linear combination of a group of variables.

3. Beta weights can be interpreted as revealing the relative strength of any one predictor when included in the equation with the other predictors.

4. See my article, "Christian Education and Youth Retention in the Seventh-day Adventist Church," *The Journal of Adventist Education*, 62, no. 3 (Feb./Mar. 2000), 8-13.

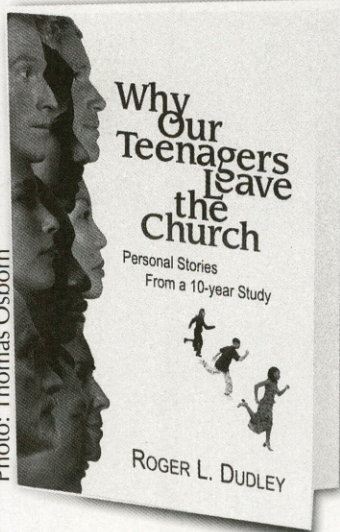
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The Church Transformed

Why Our Teenagers Leave the Church: Personal Stories from a 10-year Study, by Roger L. Dudley (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald, 2000), 221 pages.

Reviewed by Michael Zbaraschuk

Photo: Thomas Osborn



For anyone interested in trends in Adventist membership, this book, the fruit of a massive ten-year survey of North American Adventist adolescents by researcher extraordinaire Roger Dudley, is a fascinating read. Dudley's study sent surveys to 1,523 (with a varying response rate) Adventist young people for ten years from 1987 to 1997. The survey asked the teenagers questions about their relationships with the Church and sought possible correlating factors, with the intention of (hopefully) finding out causes for the massive exodus of Adventist young adults in North America.

As one of the people who filled out the surveys for five or six years before dropping out, I had a personal interest in the subject. It was a vehicle for me to revisit, from the perspective of a twenty-nine-year-old, the feelings and attitudes that I had then about and toward the Church, as well as my present feelings. I am grateful for the opportunity to reflect.

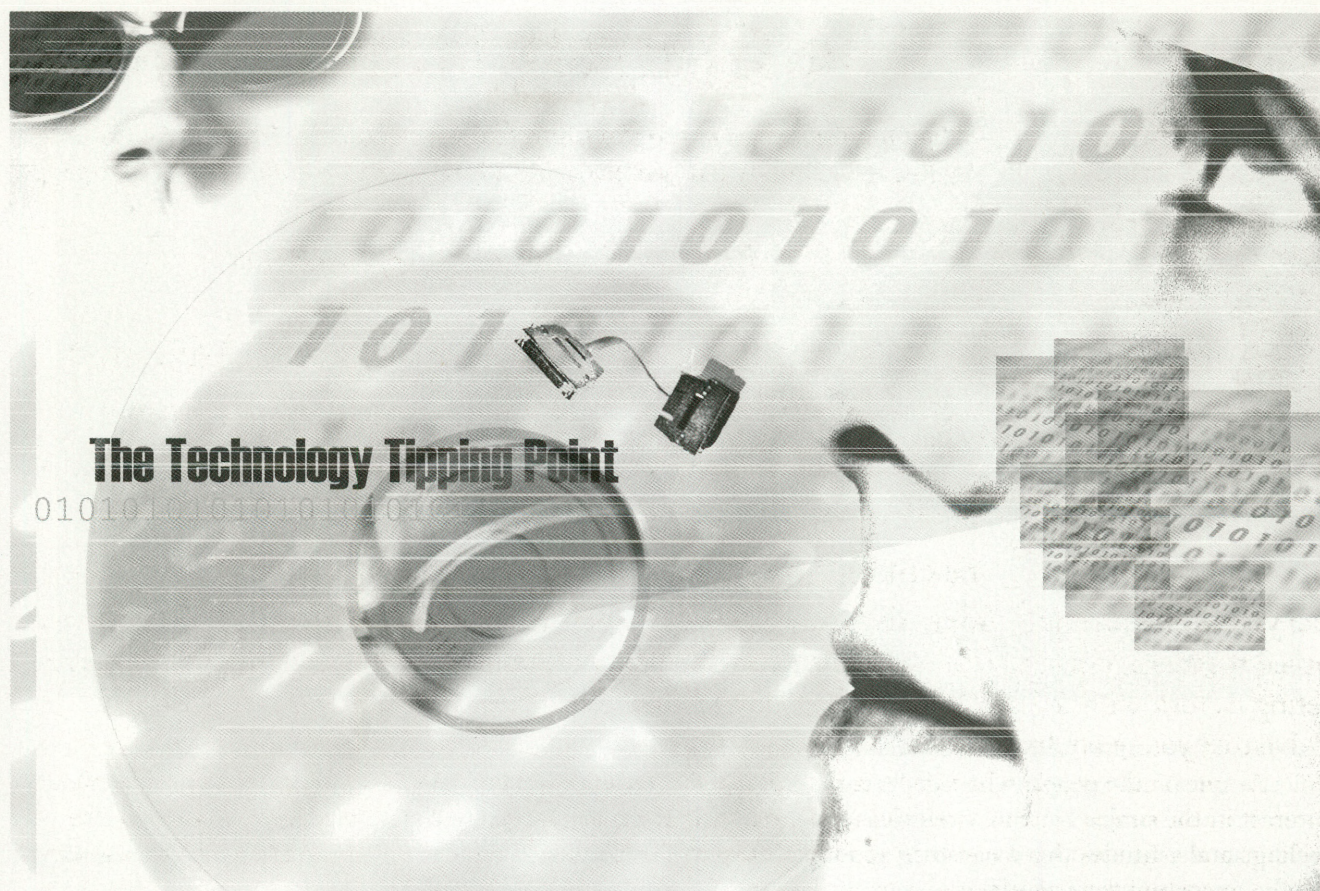
Dudley's specific statistical correlations between church membership and various factors are too numerous to detail in a short book review, but several emphases are worth mentioning. He continually notes that it is the quality of relationships that tend to keep people within the Church and calls for nurturing open, caring attitudes toward teenagers and young adults. In a similar vein, he finds that among those who continued to reply to the survey and to identify themselves as Adventists, a "grace orientation"—rather than some form of legalism centered on lifestyle issues—was something that they responded to and saw as the ideal for the Church. These two themes are touchstones for Dudley and resound throughout his analyses of the data and his predictions for the future.

Although Dudley's concern for young Adventists is obvious and commendable (I found myself touched by his stories of the personal responses from various participants), I was not entirely comfortable with the way in which membership in the Church seemed to be defined. I understand that researchers in the social sciences like to have things they can measure and analyze statistically—like the frequency of church attendance or personal Bible study—but such analyses have the weakness of "pre-orienting" the responses. If one understands one's spirituality differently than a "relationship with Jesus as personal Lord and Savior," then none of the responses to a question asked about the state of one's soul in relation to said Jesus makes much sense. I recall having a vague disquiet when filling out my responses that the answers were not the end of the story, but I didn't necessarily have the concepts to spell out my true responses.

Interestingly, Dudley recognizes the changing nature of moral standards in the Church, pointing out that a majority of young Adventists who decided to stay within the Church disagreed with church teachings on dancing, going to movies, jewelry, and listening to rock music. What he doesn't seem to realize is that Adventist self-identification can also be compatible with differing spiritualities and theologies—and indeed is, as the multicultural nature of the Church demonstrates. Some of us may have "left" according to Dudley's survey, but some are perhaps creatively transforming the Church by remaining within it.

The Church is being transformed. Will it look enough like Dudley's church that it can be called the same thing?

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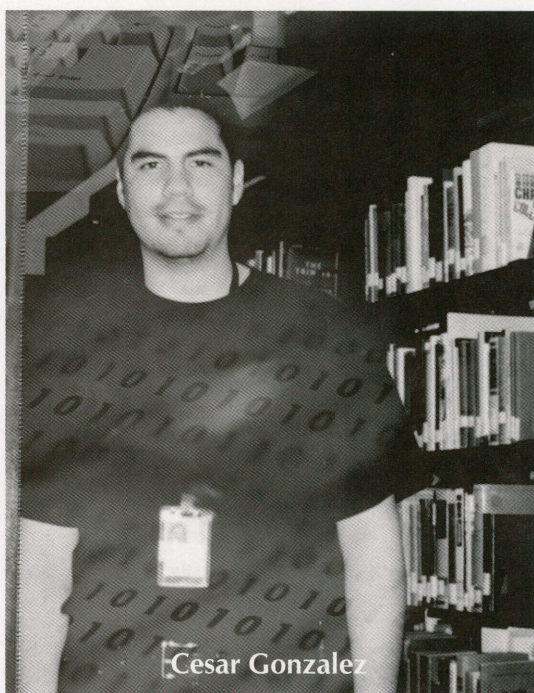
The Technology Tipping Point

by Bettina Krause

Giving young adults “a place at the table” or “a piece of the pie” still dominates discussions about the role of young people within the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This model gauges youth power in the Church by the number of seats administrators have allowed under-30s to occupy on church committees or think tanks. But this top-down view of power relations within the Church obscures how far young adults are already transforming the culture of the Adventist Church.

In a practical sense, it is under-30s who are in a position to empower and equip the Church, not just the other way round. In the media-saturated, technology-driven society of the West, young adults are custodians of a language that the Adventist Church must learn in order to effectively communicate the gospel of Christ to a new generation.

For under-30s, postmodernism is not an academic theory, it's a worldview. They don't have to read Foucault or Derrida to know that their peers distrust concepts presented as absolute truth. They may not have heard about “deconstruction,” but they're unlikely to accept authoritative pronouncements—political, religious or



Cesar Gonzalez

moral—on face value. And they're quick to understand emerging technology and sense its potential.

At the Church's North American and world headquarters, leaders are recognizing, in ways that go beyond mere tokenism, the unique contribution of young adults. Technological expertise and media savvy are propelling more of those under thirty into positions of influence. The process may not necessarily be intentional, but as the Church ventures further into the fields of media technology and communication, under-30s are playing an increasingly important role as guides through society's new, postmodern landscape.

"The church is changing; there's no way around that," says Cesar Gonzalez, who at twenty-seven years describes himself as a "mid-pack Gen X-er." Gonzalez, an assistant in the North American Division youth department, was a participant in Roger Dudley's study, filling out two surveys before leaving the Church in his late teens. ("I was one of the ones they lost track of.") In his early twenties Gonzalez came back, convinced that the Adventist Church was on the road to irrelevancy among his peers unless it could start to communicate more effectively with young adults. After peddling the idea of an online youth magazine to a number of different church leaders, he was talked into heading up the project himself.

It's not always an easy work environment, admits Gonzalez. The often hierarchical administrative structure he encounters at the church headquarters is the opposite of the "very decentralized, grassroots-based method of leadership" favored by people under thirty.



Celeste Ryan

"You go into a meeting and you're sitting there with a group of people whose children are older than you are," says Gonzalez. "Suddenly you represent, embodied in one person, an entire generation. And you have that weight on you. At the same time, however, the generation that you're representing has trouble really trusting you because they see you as part of the establishment simply for working in this building."

Gonzalez believes, though, that the Church in North America is making real progress and is moving beyond a head-in-the-sand approach to the challenges of reaching out to a postmodern generation.

Gonzalez has helped construct The Connect Network—a Web site-based network of 170 young adult ministries, more than 350 ministry individuals, and an e-mail list that serves more than 1,700 Adventist young adults across North America (Web address: www.saltyfish.net). Gonzalez says that another breakthrough project in the works is a video series, "Seven Nights," aimed at educating local churches and leaders about how to effectively communicate church teachings, like tithe-paying, to postmodern kids.

Despite the challenges he sees, Gonzalez is allowing himself some cautious optimism. He cites Impact Toronto 2000, the youth-initiated program of community service and outreach that ran simultaneously with the recent General Conference Session in Toronto, Canada, in July this year, as an example of continuing youth engagement with the Church. "Yes, there is hope," says Gonzalez. "More and more we're



John Beckett

being asked to be at the table where decisions are being made and plans are being made.”

A quarter of all people who work in the both the General Conference and the North American Division headquarters are under thirty-five. In the Information Systems Services of the General Conference—the computer support department—those under thirty-five fill 40 percent of the positions.¹

John Beckett, 23, is the youngest departmental assistant director at the General Conference. Working in the communication department as webmaster for the Adventist Church’s Web site, Beckett is largely responsible for the image of the Church received by the 12,000-plus people who visit the site each week. He started work with the General Conference in mid-1999, and says he came from the corporate sector, where there was “a tendency to micro-manage.” In contrast, Beckett says, the high level of autonomy and trust invested in him at the General Conference “took a while to sink in.”

“It was amazing how much freedom I had, and continue to have, in developing the site,” Beckett says. “The management style here assumes that people are going to use their common sense and do the right thing most of the time.”

Beckett, who keeps an eye on the Web sites of other Christian denominations, believes the Adventist Church is “definitely forward-looking” when it comes to using new technology. “Because of this, there seem to be more and more young people working in this building who have jobs relating to computers, or video

and media technology.” Beckett also speculates that the “fairly flat pay scale”—with no huge differentiation between starting and senior salaries—is attractive to younger people who start out in tech-related fields.

If there’s any truth to Marshall McLuhan’s old adage that the medium is the message, then young adults are helping to shape the Adventist message to society in more ways than one. Media relations—developing a proactive, ongoing relationship with the media—is a field that is just being revived for the Adventist Church, says Celeste Ryan, who was 28 when she was named media relations coordinator for the Church in North America. “In the past we’ve been primarily reactive; concentrating on putting out media fires when they flare up, rather than giving the media a consistent stream of good news about the Church and its activities.”

Although Ryan believes that the qualities of a good public relations professional remain the same regardless of the age factor, she agrees that the sound bite generation may be more aware of the untapped potential for furthering the Church’s mission through the media.

Like Gonzalez, Ryan fell into church work while chasing a big idea. In 1991, at 21, she founded the youth-orientated magazine *The View*, using the only computer in the North American Division Youth Department during the youth director’s lunch breaks. Now, in her role as a media liaison and spokesperson, Ryan, 30, is very often the voice of the Adventist Church in North America for the secular media.

“In a number of departments here, there’s an increasing tendency to give young adults a chance; to trust them with more responsibility,” says Ryan. In return, Ryan believes under-30s contribute enthusiasm—“We can’t help dreaming big”—and, in the communication field, a knowledge of media that has been imbibed since childhood rather than learned from a book.

Notes and References

1. Statistics as of August 2000, from the human resources department that serves both the General Conference and North American Division church headquarters.

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Now What?

Post-Toronto Triumphalism



“We need to move beyond seeing churches as entertainment centers for saints. We need to get more priests into the priesthood of believers. If we wait for the clergy to finish the work, Adventism will be on earth for a little longer than eternity.”

- George Knight.

With 60,000 to 80,000 people in attendance for Sabbath services, the Toronto General Conference Session was an obvious success in terms of generating an audience. Written reports in union papers, the *Adventist Review*, even *Adventist Today* have painted glowing pictures of a "sweet, sweet spirit" at the meetings.

There was also a triumphant mood in the daily counting of the Church's successes: baptisms (accessions per hour were noted), countries entered, churches built—"Almost Home" seemed to mean, "We're almost done. Our checklist is completed."

What will endure from the meetings in Toronto? In this issue we have brought together materials from Toronto that we feel will help to inform the Church's future.

And now what? For the church organization, post-Toronto brings meetings. On September 18 and 19 the first international Council on Witness and Evangelism takes place in Silver Spring, Maryland. General Conference president Jan Paulsen chairs, with newly elected Vice President Ted Wilson serving as vice-chair and Mark Finley as secretary.

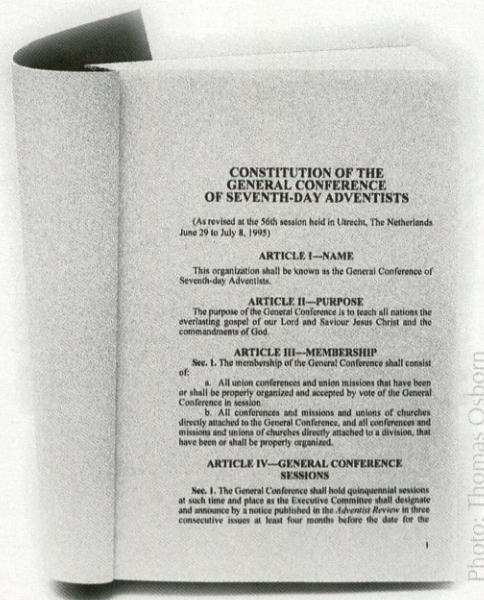
At the Annual Council session the first week in October, the General Conference Executive Committee members will review conflict of interest statements, vote on the revised document concerning theological education, and work on the budget. The nominating committee will be very busy. Board members for General Conference institutions such as Adventist Health Loma Linda, Adventist World Radio, and the new International Board for Ministerial and Theological Education must be selected. All of the editors must also be named for denominational publications from the *Adventist Review* to the Sabbath School study guides. Other positions to be filled include those of GC field secretaries, as well as others with ADRA and Global Mission.

In his opening address President Paulsen said, "We are more of a community than an organization." One of the important statistics that emerged out of Toronto is that 40 percent of the people in that community has joined within the past five years. The meetings will help keep the organization functioning smoothly, but there is also an important task for each member recorded in 1 John 3:18-23: "Let us not love with words or tongue, but with actions and in truth. . . . And this is what God says we must do: Believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another."

One Size Fits All?

Church Manual Changes at the Toronto Session

by John Brunt



INTRODUCTION

In the Seventh-day Adventist Church members are no longer disfellowshipped, they are “removed from membership.” We no longer have an “outline” of fundamental beliefs, but a “summary.” And treasurers are no longer instructed to paste invoices on ledger sheets. These are only a few of many less-than-earthshaking revisions that delegates to the Toronto General Conference voted to incorporate in the *Church Manual*.

Significant changes also occurred, however. The most important of these was the adoption of a new chapter in the *Church Manual* on divorce and remarriage. After being discussed for hours, and referred back to committee for reappearance at the 2005 General Conference Session in St. Louis, the proposal rose from the ashes like a phoenix on the final day to become a part of the newly revised *Church Manual*.

The *Church Manual* can only be revised each five years when delegates come together in full session, although this policy was partially modified at this General Conference. This change creates a cumbersome process that raises questions about the role and function of the *Church Manual*. Lowell Cooper, general vice president of the General Conference and chair of the *Church Manual* Committee, used an interesting metaphor in his introduction to the discussion on *Church Manual* issues. He said that the *Church Manual* is like a baptismal robe, where one size fits all.¹ Said Cooper, “It is made to fit everybody, and therefore, in any one particular situation it may not seem to fit very comfortably, but it is one of the instruments by which we affirm and express our worldwide oneness.”

The intensity of the discussion that surrounds many of the *Church Manual* issues, especially those that relate to marriage and divorce, raises questions about whether a complex, global church such as ours can truly have one *Manual* where one size fits everyone. Is it possible for such detailed instructions as appear in the *Manual* to be an instrument of worldwide oneness, or does it become an instrument of worldwide contention?

We will withhold reflection on these questions until we have surveyed what happened in the discussions in Toronto relating to the *Church Manual*. We will first look at the most important issue, the "Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage" chapter that was adopted, move on to issues relating to the role and function of the *Church Manual*, then survey two additional items. Finally, we will offer some concluding reflections.

MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

History and Background

On the fourth of July 1995, during the General Conference Session in Utrecht, The Netherlands, Gerald Winslow, dean of the Faculty of Religion at Loma Linda University, moved that a commission from the world field be formed to study the issue of marriage and divorce, suggest revisions to the *Church Manual*, and report back to the General Conference in 2000.

The motion passed and a commission was formed. It was chaired by Matthew Bediako, who was at that time a general vice president of the General Conference and has now been elected General Conference secretary. A report of this commission was made in April 1999 that was sent to the General Conference Committee and then to the Annual Council. Winslow expressed disappointment that not all of the provisions of the commission document were accepted, but nevertheless felt that the proposals from Annual Council and the *Church Manual* Committee to the General Conference were an improvement over the present chapter in the *Manual*.

The proposed chapter is not a radical change from present wording in the *Church Manual*, but it does offer the following modifications. First, it begins with a new statement of biblical and theological background on marriage and divorce that puts the rules of the *Manual* into a broader context, and ends

with a new section on the Church's responsibility to support families. These new sections give the chapter a quite different tone.

As for specifics, incest and child sexual abuse are included as sexual perversions that should be included in the Greek term *porneia* (fornication or sexual infidelity) in Matthew 5, which limits the right of divorce and remarriage to *porneia* committed by the spouse. The new proposal also adds the abandonment of a believer by an unbelieving spouse as grounds for divorce. Paul clearly allows for this in 1 Corinthians 7:10-15, a passage that has not received attention in the *Church Manual* in the past. In addition, much of the language has been changed to produce a more redemptive tone. For instance, the document no longer speaks about innocent and guilty parties.

Due to the complexity of the debate we will begin with a discussion of procedure, then move to issues of content.

Procedure

Even before the proposed new chapter on marriage and divorce was introduced on Tuesday morning of the session, procedural controversy began. During the session on Monday afternoon, Larry Caviness, president of the Southern California Conference, rose to request that the commission document itself, not merely the proposed *Church Manual* revisions, be presented to the delegates.² He then asked if this should be made a motion.

Ironically, Matthew Bediako, who chaired the commission, was then chairing the session and ruled that the motion was not in order; what would be discussed was already in the agenda books. Caviness countered that if the delegates had the commission report, they would be better informed on background material related to the issue. He asked if it would be possible for the delegates to have a copy of the commission report.

Bediako responded that commissions generally report to the Administrative Committee of the General Conference (ADCOM), which it had done, and that it would not be appropriate to give the delegates the commission report.

Alvin Kibble supported Larry Caviness's request. Said Kibble: "This is a very sensitive issue that many of us feel needs to be considered very carefully and thoughtfully before a final decision is made, and in all due respect to our chair, we would like to ask that it be

given further consideration.”³

Chair Bediako asked for patience and requested that delegates wait until the issue arose the next day. Kibble responded that there would be logistic constraints in making the document available, so if it were to be done the night would be needed to prepare the document. Delegate Brian Bull argued that ADCOM had not appointed the commission, but that the General Conference in session had. Therefore, the commission report should logically come back to the session. The chair finally said that he would consult and that a decision would be announced on Tuesday.

On Tuesday morning, the president of the General Conference, Jan Paulsen, rose and expressed his belief that there are no secrets in the Church. The commission report was in the public domain and the leaders would be happy to let delegates see it. However, Paulsen plead that delegates not refer to it, because that particular document was not under consideration. They should respond instead to the proposal from the *Church Manual* committee; matters would be confused if the delegates discussed two documents on the floor at the same time.⁴ At that point, the chair, General Conference vice president Robert Kloosterhuis said that he was ready to receive suggestions from the assembly. Gerald Winslow, who had made the initial motion five years earlier, moved that the report be made available to delegates who requested it. This motion was seconded and voted.

The discussion of the actual document began. Lowell Cooper, chair of the *Church Manual* Committee, suggested what appeared to be a reasonable procedure. First, the document would be read, which would allow delegates to become familiar with its scope, tone, and flow. After that, time would be set aside for questions, answers, and comments, but no motions would be accepted. After a period of input, the document would be placed formally before the body for discussion and approval.⁵

Robert Kloosterhuis, who chaired this particular session, followed this procedure. The document was read, then a number of general comments were made. Mario Veloso, secretary of the *Church Manual* Committee, moved adoption of the document and delegates began to work through it section by section offering amendments, three of which passed.

However, when discussion continued on Wednesday morning, the new chair, outgoing North American Division president Al McClure, changed the procedure. He suggested that action taken at the beginning of the session prevented changes from being made

from the floor due to the difficulty of editing a document in such a large group. Furthermore, he said that delegates were limited to accepting or referring the document. He would not allow individual items to be referred, only the whole.

This created a frustrating situation. Delegates could make speeches regarding specific issues but could not vote to amend or refer specifics. Therefore, committee members would lack guidance as to the significance of speeches. Would the words represent the will of the delegates or only the opinion of one person? No one knew. The whole session seemed unproductive in terms of moving toward any kind of vote.

Finally, one delegate suggested that the procedure seemed destined to secure the document's rejection, because, without the ability to amend, the delegates would probably defeat it. The chair assured the delegate that he did not intend such a purpose, but that he was simply trying to follow the voted procedure. A motion was then made to rescind the adopted procedure and allow individual amendments. The chair ruled that the motion to rescind required a two-thirds majority, which it failed to receive, and therefore lost.

At the Wednesday afternoon session, yet another chair presided, General Conference vice president Calvin Rock. Rock began by confessing that there had not been a vote to disallow amendments from the floor—it was only a suggestion made on the first night. He said that the chair for the Wednesday morning session had adopted the rule, which was his right, but that the session had not voted it as a policy. Rock then went on to admit that the body was in something of a dilemma. How would it arrive at a vote? If it approved the document, it would ratify a document to which delegates had made many suggestions and referrals, but that was not what the body wanted.

Rock gave the delegates two options. On one hand, they could go on as they had in the morning, expecting the whole matter to be referred back to delegates later to absorb all of the suggestions. This would clearly take longer than possible during the current session and require reconsideration at the next General Conference Session in 2005.

The second option was to allow amendments and work through the document so that delegates could vote on the final document. Here, too, Rock was less than encouraging that the process could be finished during the course of the session. He then allowed about one hour of discussion about the options, without allowing any motions.

Finally, Brian Bull moved that the amendments

be accepted, that discussion be allowed on each amendment, and that if two-thirds of the delegates approved, discussion be ended. If it did not end, ten more delegates would be allowed to speak and they would again strive for closure. This motion was defeated. Peter Roennfeldt then moved to refer the entire document back to the *Church Manual* Committee. In response, Lowell Cooper asked if it should come back at this session or the next, to which Roennfeldt responded in 2005. After some discussion about the makeup of the committee over the next five years—especially in terms of gender and age—delegates voted to refer the entire document back to the *Church Manual* Committee for reappearance in 2005. Apparently, no changes would be made at this session, and five more years would pass before any of the commission's work would come to fruition.

However, the end of the session brought a dramatic turnaround. On Thursday afternoon, Australian delegate Gary Hodgkin announced that the following morning he planned to enter a motion to rescind the referral of the proposed chapter on marriage and divorce and asked that the revised chapter be considered. The chair ruled that course of action permissible, and the following morning the motion to rescind was put forth. With amazingly little debate and in a surprisingly short time, delegates voted to adopt the document as presented, with the three minor revisions made on Tuesday afternoon. Thus, the newly revised chapter will appear in the forthcoming edition of the *Church Manual*.

Issues of Content

It is hardly surprising that two sides attacked the new chapter. Some felt it did not go far enough to change the Church's long-standing policies, whereas others considered it too radical a departure from the past.

On the former side, delegate James Dick suggested that the first part of the document was much more redemptive and positive, but that the second half retained the statement's former legislative attitude. He argued that the second half of the commission's document would have been much better. Bill Richardson, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Andrews University, spoke to the difficulty of linking legislation to redemption, and called for dealing with individuals in a pastoral and personal way. Several delegates objected to the language already present in the *Manual* that requires some who violate marriage

vows to be removed from membership—even if there is evidence of repentance—because of the public reproach they bring on the cause of God.

On the other hand, other delegates felt that the policy in the newly revised chapter lowered standards. Paul Ratsara said, "This document is no other than a way of introducing another grounds for divorce and remarriage." After citing its inclusion of abandonment by the unbelieving partner, in accordance with 1 Corinthians 7, he added, "So this document, if adopted, will lower the standards of the Seventh-day Adventist Church."⁶

Perhaps the greatest objections arose against inclusion of Paul's counsel in 1 Corinthians 7:10-15. Although the passage clearly permits divorce whenever an unbelieving spouse leaves a believer, many delegates balked, as if Paul's standards are not high enough for the *Church Manual*. Manuel Torilla Jr. said that, clearly, the only ground for divorce that Ellen White permits is adultery. John Fowler of the General Conference Education Department argued that the passage in Corinthians is simply too difficult to understand or to exegete, and that to allow abandonment by an unbelieving partner as grounds for divorce carried the passage too far and read too much into it.

Some even objected to the redemptive tone and affirmation of equality in marriage. Samuel Koranteng-Pipim, a worker in the Michigan Conference but a delegate from Africa, accused the document of "fuzzy thinking" by presenting a view of partnership in marriage that was not biblical and that opened the way for women's ordination. According to him, the document introduced a view of marriage that did not recognize distinctive roles that God had instituted.

In spite of objections from both sides, however, only three small revisions were made in the chapter as proposed by the *Church Manual* Committee. (1) At the beginning of the document, the word "still" was deleted from the following sentence: "Marriage is a divine institution established by God himself before the Fall when everything, including marriage, was still very good." (2) A text in parentheses that supported the idea of partnership in marriage, Ephesians 5:22-28, was expanded to include Ephesians 5:21, as well. (3) The following sentence was deleted: "As part of the curse of sin, rulership was given to the husband." Ironically, some objected to this sentence because it gave rulership to the husband at all, whereas others objected because it relegated the husband's leadership to the period after the Fall, rather than making it God's original intention at Creation.

THE ROLE AND FUNCTION OF THE CHURCH MANUAL

We have already mentioned Lowell Cooper's metaphor of the *Church Manual* as a baptismal robe where one size fits all. Discussion at the session proved that one size does not, in fact, fit everyone comfortably. Considerable discussion centered on the role of the *Manual* itself. The first proposed revision suggested a new chapter entitled "Church Manual Authority." Included was a sentence that read: "The covenanted authority of the *Church Manual* makes its content binding for every local church/company and every level of its organization throughout the world."⁷ This statement was eventually referred back to the committee and the words "binding authority" were deleted from the revised proposal that actually passed.

These words, however, enabled delegates to express opposing views on the reach of the *Church Manual*. On one hand, delegate Dan Jackson argued that, by making the contents of the *Manual* binding on every congregation, the Church might inadvertently promote Congregationalism because churches would simply ignore the *Manual* if not given sufficient ability to exercise discretion. On the other hand, Onaolapo Ajibade argued that there can be no unity unless provisions of the *Church Manual* are binding on all Adventist congregations throughout the world.

Some delegates expected the *Manual* to provide total uniformity. Violeto Bocala expressed discomfort with permission that the *Manual* gives congregations to decide whether to elect officers for either one or two years. On the other side, during the discussion on divorce and remarriage Herman Bauman expressed a different kind of expectation, arguing that it was unrealistic to expect members from the western United States to western Africa and from South America to South Dakota to do things exactly the same. Bauman suggested that general statements could be made in the basic *Manual*, followed by more detailed provisions in division supplements.

An interesting example of difficulties encountered when trying to make one size fit all arose on Sunday afternoon, when a seemingly intuitive and self-evident statement was discussed. The statement simply said that only church members could be church officers. Exception was made for licensed and credentialed ministers who pastored in a district.

Immediately, however, delegates raised possible

exceptions. Ken Corkum, a district pastor, pointed out that his spouse could only hold membership in one of the churches he pastors, yet her talents are desired by all of them and all want her to hold office. Andrea Luxton, a college president, pointed out that colleges like to include students as church officers, even though many do not transfer membership. Delegate Martin Feldbush added that there are women who pastor districts, but that often they are commissioned rather than licensed or credentialed as ministers. Another pastor said that his congregation includes graduate students from other countries who do not wish to transfer membership, yet are valuable leaders in their adopted church. So complicated did this seemingly obvious statement become that it was eventually referred back to the committee.

One action taken to address the challenge of covering an entire world church in one *Church Manual* was to separate some of its material and place it at the end of chapters as explanatory material, rather than as voted *Church Manual* policy. Thus, in the future the entire General Conference in session will not need to consider changes in each tiny detail.

OTHER INDIVIDUAL ACTIONS

It would be impossible to cover all of the discussions about and changes made in the *Church Manual* at this session. At the beginning, delegates received a notebook of business meeting agenda items. Items 401-89 on pages 70-240 covered proposed changes to the *Church Manual*, most of which were voted. Topics ranged from the marriage and divorce policy to the role of church officers and the way treasurers of local churches make reports. Many of these proposals were voted with no discussion. What follows are examples of two items that delegates debated.

The Remnant Church

Delegate Sigrid Schulz questioned the statement that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is the remnant church. He argued that other Christians will also be in heaven and proposed changing the *Church Manual* to read, "I accept and believe that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is part of the remnant church." Several delegates objected strenuously, however. Oregon Conference president Alf Birch suggested that it was not appropriate to discuss this issue be-

cause the original statement represented one of the Church's fundamental doctrines. The amendment was overwhelmingly defeated. Ron Bissell, from the SDA seminary in the Philippines, then offered another amendment that would have added the word "visible" in front of "remnant." However, Lassew Raelly, outgoing president of the Eastern Africa Division, countered that the new amendment simply restated the one that delegates had just defeated, and that amendment failed, as well.

Age for Baptism

The following new statement was also proposed for the *Manual*: "While there is no stated minimum age for baptism, it is recommended that children who express a desire to be baptized should be recognized and encouraged by including them in Bible study classes which may lead to baptism when appropriate."⁸ Some felt that this would open the way for baptism at any age. Others objected to the word "minimum." Finally, Calvin Rock proposed a compromise that passed.

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

It is clear that revising a *Church Manual* in a committee that includes hundreds of delegates can be messy and unwieldy. Yet in some ways it can also be inspiring, for seldom in the world does one see people from many different nations sitting together discussing issues often central to their values, values that bind them together as a community.

Part of the process was intensely interesting, yet part was incredibly tedious and boring. One afternoon, I sat in the press box next to a communication intern, a college student, who said, "This is so boring. I need a remote to fast forward through it." At least she stayed through the discussion, but many delegates did not. At some sessions, there were as few as four hundred out of a possible two thousand who remained in attendance.⁹

The quality of leadership among session chairs varied greatly. Some were always on top of complex issues and amendments, and others were not. Sitting beside the presiding chair, ready to answer questions, was Lowell Cooper, chair of the *Church Manual* Committee, who always seemed well informed and on top of the issues, no matter how complex.

Clearly, the move to put some of the *Church*

Manual material in a secondary category is on the right track. However, it is hard not to wonder whether *enough* has been placed in that category. As the Church becomes more global and complex, it needs to maintain unity, but unity can never be a matter of uniform details in a multicultural world. As Lowell Cooper repeatedly reminded delegates, the *Manual* has an educative function necessary and desirable in a world church. Yet delegate Dan Jackson, who expressed concern that too much uniformity could bring about the opposite reaction and promote congregationalism, also expressed a legitimate concern.

Unless our unity is based on common commitment to Jesus Christ, the teaching of his word, and our commitment to love each other and join each other in fulfilling Jesus' mission to the world, no amount of uniformity in practice can achieve unity. Perhaps the day will come when a proposal such as Herman Bauman's—for a much smaller *Church Manual* with division supplements—might prove helpful.

I am a large person who often finds that clothing advertised as "one size fits all" does not actually fit me. My impression is that if the *Church Manual* will be truly a one-size-fits-all document, it will need more elastic than it now has.

Notes and References

1. This article is based on my own notes at the session and on *Bulletins* issued by the *Adventist Review*. Footnotes refer to issue number (ten in all) of the *Bulletin* and its page. Lowell Cooper's initial speech can be seen in *Bulletin* 4: 29. Readers can find summaries of discussions in each business session and a list of all actions at the *Adventist Review* Web site <www.adventistreview.org>.

2. *Bulletin* 7: 22.

3. *Ibid.*

4. *Ibid.*, 8: 23.

5. *Ibid.*

6. *Ibid.*, 8: 24.

7. *Ibid.*, 4: 29.

8. *Ibid.*, 4: 30.

9. It is true that other committees, such as the 194-member Nominating Committee, also met during the business sessions, but such occurrences account for only a minority of the absent delegates.

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Divorce and Remarriage Study Commission—Report

Editor's Note: *Spectrum* has published the following report verbatim except for internal codes apparently used to identify it and related documents for administrative purposes. Readers should be aware that the commission's report abbreviates citations to four books written by Ellen G. White: *The Adventist Home* (AH), *Testimonies for the Church* (T), *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing* (MB), *Patriarchs and Prophets* (PP), and *Selected Messages* (SM).

Introduction

Throughout the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, various committees, commissions, and councils have studied the topic of marriage and the issues of divorce and remarriage in a continuing effort to clarify the Church's understanding of God's will and to provide instruction for church members and direction for those who minister to them. The current commission, with members from throughout the world field, continues the endeavor of studying the issues of marriage, divorce, and remarriage and offering guidance to the Church.

Over the course of three meetings—Hoddesdon, England, September 14 to 16, 1997; Montemorelos, Mexico, January 25 to 29, 1998; Cohutta Springs, Georgia, May 30 to June 3, 1998—the General Conference Divorce and Remarriage Study Commission has given attention to biblical, theological, and historical studies, and to the writings of Ellen G. White, current situational reports from world regions, and research reports. The Commission presented an interim report to the General Conference and division officers on September 25, 1998. During its fourth meeting on April 4 to 6, 1999, the Commission prepared this report taking into consideration the comments of the meeting of General Conference and Division Officers (GCDO) at Iguassu Falls, Brazil, on September 25, 1998.

This report consists of the following sections:

- Biblical Principles Regarding Marriage
- Biblical Principles Regarding Divorce and Remarriage
- Role of the Church in Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage
- Recommendations

Two appendices are included:

- Appendix A - Commission Appointment and Terms of Reference
- Appendix B - A list of papers and reports presented to the Commission at Hoddesdon, England, and Montemorelos, Mexico.

Biblical Principles Regarding Marriage

1. God's Original Plan for Marriage

a. The Origin of Marriage. Marriage is divinely instituted. God Himself performed the first marriage on the sixth day of creation when He brought together Adam and Eve as husband and wife (Gen 2:18-25). In declaring their marital union God said, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Gen 2:24). God intended this marriage to be the pattern for all future marriage relationships. Christ endorsed the original concept of marriage (Matt 19:3-6). Thus marriage was blessed by God as the closest human relationship.

b. The Covenant of Marriage. Marriage is a covenant which husband and wife make with each other and with God. In marriage the couple pledge their love, loyalty, and devotion to each other as long as they are both alive (Prov 2:17; Mal 2:14). The marriage covenant is built upon love (Eph 5:28, 29; Titus 2:4). Such love enables husband and wife to accept each other unconditionally, to share in each other's pain and failures, to rejoice in each other's victories and accomplishments. Paul describes the kind of love which is necessary for the marriage covenant to succeed: "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres" (1 Cor 13:4-7, NIV).

c. The Permanence of Marriage. Marriage is a life-long commitment of both partners to each other (Mark 10:2-9; Rom 7:2). Paul indicates that the commitment which Christ has for the church is a model of the relationship between husband and wife (Eph 5:31, 32). God intended this relationship to be as permanent as Christ's relationship with the church.

d. The Priority of Marriage. Paul recognized the husband-wife relationship as the primary relationship in the family (Eph 5:22-33). Marriage takes precedence over all other human relationships, even those between the spouses and their parents (Gen 2:24). No other human relationship should interfere in an inappropriate way with the marriage relationship.

e. Sexual Intimacy in Marriage. Sexual intimacy within

marriage is a sacred gift from God to the human family. It is an integral part of marriage, reserved for marriage only (Gen 2:24; Prov 5:15-20). Such intimacy, designed to be shared exclusively between husband and wife, promotes ever-increasing closeness, happiness, and security, and provides for the perpetuation of the human race. In addition to being monogamous, marriage, as instituted by God, is a heterosexual relationship (Matt 19:4, 5).

f. **Spiritual Compatibility in Marriage.** Spiritual compatibility is vital if marriage is to be fully in harmony with God's plan (Amos 3:3; 2 Cor 6:14). God desires that, through their union, husband and wife experience His love, exalt His name, and witness to His power. Throughout Scripture, marriage is used as a figure of the relationship between God and His people (Isa 54:5-7; Hos 2:19, 20; Eph 5:25-28; Rev 21:2).

g. **Marriage as Partnership.** As partners in marriage, husband and wife bear equal responsibility for the success of the marriage (Gen 1:26-28). While their responsibilities may differ, neither is more important than the other and neither is to dominate the other. Their relationship is one of mutuality and companionship (Gen 2:18). As husband and wife mutually submit to one another (Eph 5:21), they seek to encourage and build each other up in love (1 Thess 5:11). Commenting on this partnership, Ellen G White wrote: "Eve was created from a rib taken from the side of Adam, signifying that she was not to control him as the head, nor to be trampled under his feet as an inferior, but to stand by his side as an equal, to be loved and protected by him" (PP 46).

2. The Effects of the Fall on Marriage

The entrance of sin adversely affected marriage. When Adam and Eve sinned, they lost the oneness which they had known with God and with one another (Gen 3:6-24). Their relationship became marked with guilt, shame, blame, and pain. As a part of the curse of sin, rulership was given to the husband (Gen 3:16; see also PP 58, 59). Wherever sin reigns, its sad effects on marriage include alienation, desertion, unfaithfulness, neglect, abuse, violence, separation, divorce, domination of one partner by the other, and sexual perversion. Non-monogamous marriages are also an expression of the effects of sin on the institution of marriage. Such marriages, although practiced in Old Testament times, were not in harmony with the divine design. God's plan for marriage requires His people to transcend the mores of popular culture which are in conflict with the biblical view.

3. Restoration and Healing

a. **Divine Ideal to be Restored in Christ.** In redeeming the world from sin and its consequences, God also seeks to restore marriage to its original ideal. This is envisioned for the lives of those who have been born again into the kingdom of Christ, those whose hearts are being sanctified by the Holy Spirit and who have as their primary purpose in life the exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ (see also 1 Peter 3:7; MB 64).

b. **Oneness and Equality Restored in Christ.** The gospel emphasizes the love and submission of husband and wife to one another (1 Cor 7:3, 4; Eph 5:21). The model for the

husband's leadership is the self-sacrificial love and service that Christ gives to the church (Eph 5:24, 25). Peter enjoins husbands to respect their wives and treat them with consideration (1 Peter 3:7), while Paul instructs wives to respect their husbands (Eph 5:23). Commenting on Eph 5:22-28, Ellen G White says, "Neither husband nor wife is to make a plea for rulership. . . . The husband is to cherish his wife as Christ cherishes the church. And the wife is to respect and love her husband. Both are to cultivate a spirit of kindness, being determined never to grieve or injure the other" (7T 47). In Christ, oneness, equality, and mutuality in marriage are to be restored.

c. **Grace Available for All.** God seeks to restore to wholeness and reconcile to Himself all who have failed to attain the divine standard (2 Cor 5:19). This includes those who have experienced broken marriage relationships.

d. **The Role of the Church.** Moses in the Old Testament and Paul in the New Testament dealt with the problems caused by broken marriages (Deut 24:1-5, 1 Cor 7:10-16). Both, while recognizing the ideal, attempted to work constructively and redemptively with those who had fallen short of the divine standard. Similarly, the church today is called to uphold God's ideal for marriage and, at the same time, to be a reconciling, forgiving, healing community, showing understanding and compassion when brokenness occurs.

Biblical Principles Regarding Divorce and Remarriage

The Seventh-day Adventist Church's treatment of divorce and remarriage must be divinely guided. In addition to directives and specific examples, the Bible provides broad principles that enable the Church to be faithful to the divine intent and gracious in caring for its members who experience divorce.

1. Divorce is contrary to God's original purpose in creating marriage (Matt 19:3-8; Mark 10:2-9), but the Bible is not silent about it. Because divorce occurred as part of the fallen human experience, biblical legislation was given to limit the damage it caused (Deut 24:1-4). The Bible consistently seeks to elevate marriage and to discourage divorce by describing the joys of married love and faithfulness (Prov 5:18-20; Song of Sol 2:16; 4:9-5:1), by referring to the marriage-like relationship of God with His people (Isa 54:5; Jer 3:1), by focusing on the possibilities of forgiveness and marital renewal (Jer 3:1; Hos 3:1-3; 11:8, 9), and by indicating God's hatred of divorce and the misery it causes (Mal 2:15, 16; Hos 2; 3). Jesus restored the creation view of marriage as a lifelong covenant between a man and a woman (Matt 19:4-6; Mark 10:6-9). Much biblical instruction affirms marriage and seeks to correct problems which tend to weaken or destroy the marriage covenant (Eph 5:21-33; Heb 13:4; 1 Peter 3:7).

2. The covenant of marriage rests on principles of love, loyalty, exclusiveness, trust, and support upheld by both partners in obedience to God (Gen 2:24; Matt 19:6; 1 Corinthians 13; Eph 5:21-29; 1 Thess 4:1-7). When these principles are violated, the essence of the marriage covenant

is endangered. Scripture acknowledges that tragic circumstances can destroy the marriage covenant. Jesus taught that the marriage covenant may be irreparably broken through sexual immorality (Matt 5:32; 19:9), which includes a range of improper sexual behaviors. Paul indicated that death brings the marriage covenant to an end (Rom 7:2, 3), as does desertion by an unbelieving partner no longer willing to be married (1 Cor 7:15). The above do not exhaust the destructive factors that may lead to brokenness and divorce.

3. God's Word condemns violence in personal relationships (Gen 6:11, 13; Ps 11:5; Isa 58:4, 5; Rom 13:10; Gal 5:19-21). It is the spirit of Christ to love and accept, to seek to affirm and build others up, rather than to abuse or demean them (Rom 12:10; 14:19; Eph 4:26; 5:28, 29; Col 3:8-14; 1 Thess 5:11). There is no room among Christ's followers for tyrannical control and the abuse of power or authority (Matt 20:25-28; Eph 6:4). Violence in the setting of marriage and family is especially abhorrent, destroying the marriage covenant (Mal 2:14-16; see also AH 343).

4. When a couple's marriage is in danger of breaking down, every effort should be made by the partners and those in the church or family who minister to them to bring about their reconciliation in harmony with divine principles for restoring wounded relationships (Hos 3:1-3; 1 Cor 7:10, 11; 13:4-7; Gal 6:1).

5. For the brokenness of divorce, divine grace is the only remedy. When marriage fails, despite efforts toward reconciliation, former partners should be encouraged to examine their experience and to embrace the mercy and compassion of God. God is willing to comfort those who have been wounded. God also accepts the repentance of individuals who commit the most destructive sins, even those that carry with them irremediable consequences (2 Samuel 11, 12; Ps 34:18; 86:5; Joel 2:12, 13; John 8:2-11; 1 John 1:9).

6. Church members are called to forgive and accept those who have failed as God has forgiven them (Isa 54:5-8; Matt 6:14, 15; Eph 4:32). The Bible urges patience, compassion, and forgiveness in the Christian care of those who have erred (Matt 18:10-20; Gal 6:1, 2).

7. Implicit in God's forgiving grace and healing is the possibility of a new beginning (Ps 34:22; Jer 3:22; 31:17; Mark 5:1-20; John 8:11; 2 Cor 5:17; 1 John 1:9; see also 2SM 339, 340¹).

8. Marriage is an important part of the social fabric of the community of believers and involves responsibilities of the couple to the church and of the church to the couple. In their marriage, the couple bears witness to their Adventist faith and accepts the moral authority of the church (1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4). The church, as the body of Christ in which His Spirit dwells, is called upon to affirm, bless, nurture, preserve, and uphold marriage. The church has the responsibility to provide guidance and the authority to apply the principles of God's Word in difficult and complex cases of divorce and remarriage (Matt 16:19; 18:18; John 20:22, 23; 1 Cor 5:3-5; 6:1-6). Further, through the exercise of redemptive discipline and pastoral care and nurture, the church has the obligation to help erring members return to discipleship (Matt 18:15-20; Gal 6:1; Heb 12:7-12).

Role of the Church in Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage

Because marriage is part of the fabric of the community of believers, the Seventh-day Adventist Church upholds, affirms, and supports this primary human relationship. It recognizes the challenges that characterize marriage in our age and is committed to biblical principles in its ministry to families. The local church is primarily responsible for administering the policies and standards of the Seventh-day Adventist Church with reference to marriage, divorce and remarriage. When the church ministers to marriages and families, it should manifest its belief in biblical principles in the following practical ways.

1. Facilitating Marital Growth

The church provides a variety of ministries to help couples prepare for and experience marriage. The Sabbath School, worship services, various church activities at every age level, and the Seventh-day Adventist school system afford opportunities for education regarding marriage and family living.

a. **Premarital Guidance.** All couples who seek the services of a Seventh-day Adventist minister to conduct their wedding are provided with premarital guidance. Effective premarital guidance is a process involving at least 12 hours of interaction between the pastor/counselor and the couple. Together they explore a broad range of relational issues in which the pastor/counselor assumes the role of coach. If, during this process, issues arise that create concern, the couple may be encouraged to postpone their wedding or reconsider their decision to marry. If the pastor is uncomfortable with their decision to marry, the pastor may choose not to officiate at the wedding.

b. **Marriage Education and Enrichment.** The church helps couples grow together, enjoy marriage and achieve God's design for marriage. Marriage education and enrichment facilitate growth by providing opportunities for couples to develop intimacy and the skills to resolve differences and handle crises.

c. **Counseling Referral.** The church cares for couples in need by encouraging them to use support resources. The church cultivates appropriate spiritual gifts that provide support and healing. It also identifies professional resources in the community and makes referrals as needed.

d. **Enrichment for Pastoral Couples.** The church encourages pastors to devote time to their families, creates opportunities for enrichment of pastoral marriages, provides for anonymous counseling as needed, and offers in-service programs to enable them to develop skills for ministry to families.

2. Encouraging Marital Reconciliation

The church encourages individuals in marital crisis to resolve differences and build healthy marriages. It provides appropriate spiritual nurture and support. When violence and abuse are involved, special care is taken to protect the vulnerable, stop the abuse, and hold the abuser accountable.

for the abuse. In some cases of abuse and violence, reconciliation may not be possible.

3. Ministering After Marital Breakdown

Despite their own efforts and the pro-active ministry of the Church, some couples fail to sustain their marital relationship. Such breakdown calls for God's grace to be demonstrated by the church. It fosters a healing ministry which provides divorce recovery for adults and children, referrals for abusers and for victims of abuse and violence, and assistance with everyday needs.

4. Ministering to Remarried Couples

The church provides specialized premarital guidance for individuals considering remarriage. It also offers marriage enrichment experiences adapted to the unique issues confronting remarried couples and parent education designed for families with children joined together through remarriage.

5. Maintaining Church Integrity and Discipline

In carrying out its responsibility to reflect to the world the justice and grace of God, the church cares for the well-being of its members and thereby protects its reputation. The behavior of each member affects the entire community. Likewise, the demeanor of the church affects each member. As a worshiping and witnessing body, the church has a responsibility to teach and apply the principles of the Word of God. Thus, it builds up and supports; it comforts, teaches, and corrects. With respect to the individual, the church understands the ultimate purpose of discipline to be the restoration of the person to faithful discipleship and fellowship within the church. Discipline is also an opportunity for the church to reaffirm and demonstrate its commitment to biblical standards.

a. When Divorce Occurs. In order to protect its members when divorce occurs, the church guards the reputation and privacy of the spouses and all those impacted directly by the divorce. It reaches out to those going through the divorce process, encouraging them to remain within the fellowship of the community of faith. The church also makes the security and welfare of children a priority. It encourages the parents to put their children's needs above their own interests and desires. It holds parents accountable for their responsibilities to their children, including financial obligations. Divorced individuals are encouraged to take sufficient time, usually a period of years, to address the reasons for the failure of their marriage, to accept responsibility for their part in the breakdown of the marriage, to work through the process of healing and forgiveness, and to experience a sense of closure.

In order to protect the community of faith when divorce occurs, the church endeavors to minimize divisive and disruptive behavior often associated with divorce. In the interest of pastoral care, the church may decide that those in divorce recovery will not function in leadership roles. If, in the judgment of the church, individuals demonstrate no repentance, make little or no effort to support their families, bring the church into disrepute, or otherwise refuse to accept the above guidelines, the congregation may regretfully discipline them. Such discipline may include a period of

removal from church office, censure, or disfellowshipping.

b. Considerations Regarding Remarriage. Before individuals become involved in another serious relationship, they should be encouraged to complete the above recovery process. If remarriage is contemplated, the local church offers counsel. It supports their decision when it is in harmony with biblical principles. Those whose remarriage is out of harmony with biblical principles are subject to church discipline.

Recommendations

The following recommendations arise out of the biblical principles section of the report of the General Conference Divorce and Remarriage Study Commission. (They represent a practical response to very real situations in the lives of many members and challenges facing congregations.)

Bringing together the related Scriptural passages and principles undergirding a Christian response to divorce and remarriage is not a simple task. More study is needed. However, the urgency of the circumstances call for the Church's best response at this time. Based on the study by the Divorce and Remarriage Study Commission of the Bible and the writings of Ellen G White, it was

Recommended,

1. To retitle the *Church Manual* chapter "Divorce and Remarriage" to read "Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage," and to include the biblical principles regarding marriage.
2. To include in the *Church Manual* guidelines for local church ministry which support couples prior to marriage, in marriage, when marital breakdown occurs, and in remarriage.
3. To reflect in the *Church Manual* reference to divorce and remarriage, that the dual purpose of church discipline is to redeem and correct. Appropriate discipline is not punitive.
4. To give emphasis in the *Church Manual* to the use of redemptive language in matters relating to divorce and remarriage. Because in many cases it is not possible to readily or accurately determine what or whose behavior is responsible for the marital breakdown, redemptive language is more appropriate than language which judges, condemns, or labels individuals as "guilty and innocent parties." These terms often create obstacles that prevent individuals from resolving the differences between themselves and with the community of faith. Redemptive language does not preclude holding individuals and couples to accountability and disciplining those whose behavior clearly violates the marriage covenant and destroys the marital relationship.
5. To precisely rewrite the second sentence of the *Church Manual*, section 8, page 183 to avoid any inference of the concept of perpetual adultery for which the Commission found no biblical or Ellen G White support.
6. To use the term "church discipline" as the more inclusive term in all references in Chapter 15 of the *Church Manual* which prescribe "disfellowshipping." The term "church discipline" allows for the possibility of disfellowshipping,

censure, and/or a period of removal from office.

7. To replace the phrase "the guilty party" (*Church Manual*, "Our Position," page 182, number 2., end of second paragraph) with "all involved," i.e., "The church is urged to relate lovingly and redemptively toward all involved."

8. To add a paragraph as a second paragraph for *Church Manual*, "Our Position," page 182, number 3., to the effect that pastors and church leaders handling sensitive information should exercise discretion in its disclosure.

9. To add the following sentence as a second sentence for *Church Manual*, "Our Position," page 183, number 8.: "Hence, the options available to the repentant may be severely limited. His/Her plea for readmittance to regular church membership shall be considered after appropriate counsel involving the local pastor, the church board, and, if necessary, such committees as may have been set up by the local conference for these purposes."

10. To replace the *Church Manual*, "Our Position," pages 182, 183, number 4. with the following paragraph: "The spouse whose acknowledged act of unfaithfulness to the marriage vow led to the breakdown of the marriage shall be subject to church discipline. The local church shall determine the nature of the discipline and shall explain to the individual the reason and purpose of the discipline. At the discretion of the local church, that discipline may be for a stated period of time. During the time when the individual is under discipline the church, as an instrument of God's mission, shall make every effort to maintain caring and spiritually nurturing contact with the individual."

11. To include sexual abuse in the Church's understanding of *porneia* (*Church Manual*, page 182, number 2. on "fornication" and "sexual irregularities"). (See "Biblical Principles Regarding Divorce and Remarriage," number 2.)

12. To consider physical violence within marriage as unfaithfulness to the marriage vow. (See "Biblical Principles Regarding Divorce and Remarriage," number 3.)

13. To recognize abandonment of a marriage partner as unfaithfulness to the marriage vow. (See "Biblical Principles Regarding Divorce and Remarriage," number 2.)

1. Ellen G. White utilized this principle in her ministry with some difficult cases of divorce and remarriage. For further study, see Elbio Pereyra, *Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage in the Writings of Ellen G. White*, Ellen G. White Estate, February, 1987.

APPENDIX A: COMMISSION APPOINTMENT AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

Divorce and Remarriage Study Commission—Appointment

In harmony with the 1995 General Conference Session action . . . in which it was "VOTED, To request the General Conference Executive Committee to establish a study

commission with representation from all of the world field, to reconsider the matter of divorce and remarriage, and make appropriate recommendations for changes in the *Church Manual*," it was

VOTED, To appoint a Divorce and Remarriage Study Commission, with membership as follows:

Members

BEDIAKO, MATTHEW A, Chairman
Paulsen, Jan, Vice-chairman
Flowers, Ronald M, Secretary
Flowers, Karen M, Associate Secretary

Bassham, Nancy
Bocaneanu, Adrian
Craig, Bryan
Ferreira, Teofilo
Garcia-Marenko, Ada
Johnson, Audray
McFarlane, Donald
McVay, John
Musvosvi, Joel
Omana, Evelyn
Pollard, Leslie
Rodriguez, Angel
Sarli, Joel
Vyhmeister, Nancy
Winslow, Gerald

One additional member, who has experienced divorce, to be appointed by the General Conference Administrative Committee

Divorce and Remarriage Study Commission—Terms of Reference Approval

VOTED, To approve terms of reference for the Divorce and Remarriage Study Commission, as follows:

TERMS OF REFERENCE

AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

1. Review biblical principles related to marriage and divorce and reaffirm the commitment of the Church to the biblical ideals for marriage.

1. Power to act.

2. Study the incidence, nature, and effects of marital breakup among church members.

2. Power to act.

3. Identify ways in which the Church can minister appropriately to those members and families experiencing marital and family breakup.

3. Power to act.

4. Examine the issues related to remarriage after divorce among church members.

4. Power to act.

5. Outline a process for providing resources and a network of help and support to those who are contemplating marriage or remarriage, to those who are married, and to those who are separated, divorced, or going through marital breakdown.

6. Prepare an interim report to be submitted to ADCOM by September 1998.

7. Prepare a final report to be submitted to ADCOM by April 30, 1999.

5. Power to act.

6. Power to act.

7. Power to act.

Teofilo Ferreira, *Personal Survey of Current European Situations*

Karen M & Ronald M Flowers, *A Sample of Pastors' Questions and Concerns Regarding Divorce and Remarriage from Four World Divisions: EAD, EUD, NAD, SPD*

Ada Garcia-Marenko*, *Divorce in Local Churches in Inter-America*

David Havstein, *Divorce and Remarriage: A Brief Report on the Situation Within the SDA Church of Norway*

Donald W McFarlane, *A Brief Look at Divorce and Remarriage in the British Union*

John McVay*, *One Window into the Complexities of Divorce and Remarriage in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America*

Joel Musvosvi*, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Eastern Africa Division*

Leslie Pollard, *A View From the Front Lines*

Nancy Vyhmeister, *Divorce and Remarriage in the South American Division*

APPENDIX B: PAPERS AND REPORTS PRESENTED TO THE COMMISSION AT HODDESDON, ENGLAND AND MONTEMORELOS, MEXICO

Divorce and Remarriage Study Commission
Hoddesdon, Herts., England
September 14-16, 1997

Papers Presented

Bryan Craig, *The Long Term Effects of Separation, Divorce, and Remarriage on Seventh-day Adventist Couples and Families*

Andreas Erben, *Predictors of Divorce Adjustment Among Members of Three Conservative Protestant Denominations* (1997 doctoral dissertation, Andrews University, summary attached)

Teofilo Ferreira, *Summary of Biblical and E. G. White References to Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage*

Karen M & Ronald M Flowers, *Review of Current Research Regarding Divorce and Remarriage Among Seventh-day Adventists*

Bert B Haloviak, *Law or Compassion: SDA Approaches to Divorce, Remarriage and Church Fellowship*

Gerald Winslow, *Adventists and Divorce: Symptoms of Dissonance*

Reports

Adrian Bocaneanu, *Romanian Report*

Andreas Bochmann, *Divorce & Remarriage: A German Perspective*

Bryan Craig, *A Report of Pastoral Responses in the South Pacific Division Regarding the Way the Church Handles Issues of Separation, Divorce and Remarriage*

Other Documents

Comparisons of *Church Manual* inclusions from 1932 to present

*Oral reports

Divorce and Remarriage Study Commission
Montemorelos, Mexico
January 25-28, 1998

Papers Presented

Felix Cortez A, *The Role of the Church With Regard to Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage*

Richard Davidson, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Old Testament*

Arthur Patrick, *Ellen White and the Pastoral Care of Divorced Persons: Toward a Seventh-day Adventist Perspective*

Jon Paulien, *Divorce and Remarriage: A Review of Some NT Texts*

Loren Wade, *Marriage and Covenant: Reflections on the Theology of Marriage*

Reports

Gordon Martinborough, *Divorce and Remarriage From the Perspective of the English-Speaking Caribbean*

Evelyn Omana, *A Report to the General Conference Divorce and Remarriage Study Commission from Venezuela*

A President with the Heart of a Youth Pastor

The Election of Don C. Schneider

by Doug Morgan

For most observers the outcome was no surprise. On July 3 in Toronto, Don C. Schneider, 57, was elected president of the North American Division of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Although expressions of support for and optimism about the new president were widespread, troubling questions emerged about the process by which he was elected: Did delegates have access to the information necessary to make wise choices in electing church leaders? Did a wealthy church member who has been exceptionally generous in financial support of the Church exert improper influence over the election? What was the role of the General Conference president in determining the outcome? How might such an election be conducted so that the various segments of the Church can trust that their voices have registered a fair and equitable influence? Is it healthy for a twenty-first-century church that the key decisions about leadership are made "behind closed doors," with no public record of the proceedings?

The Person

Schneider embarks on his new responsibility with the strength of an exceptional breadth of experience as a church leader in the North American Division. He has served in an administrative post in five of the division's nine unions. After completing his B.A. at Union College and M.A. at Andrews University, Schneider spent a few years in pastoral ministry and moved rapidly into administration. He served as a youth director at both the conference and union conference levels and then, at the age of thirty-four, was elected president of the Wyoming Conference in 1977. Over the next fifteen years he successively led the New Jersey, Arkansas-Louisiana, Rocky Mountain, and Northern California Conferences as president. Since 1994, he has presided over the Lake Union Conference.

One union conference official has commented that Don Schneider brings to the NAD presidency "the heart of the youth pastor"—an image that perhaps best encapsulates the most prominent characteristics and commitments of Schneider's ministry. He "keeps it simple," viewing all church



Photo: ANN/Richard Dower

issues through the lens of two basic spiritual themes: a personal relationship with Christ and winning others to Christ. He loves to tell stories and is renowned for a great sense of humor. He has a reputation for openness—a willingness to listen, admit mistakes and quickly apologize, and refer matters about which he knows little to others with expertise. He is viewed as an “encourager and supporter;” as a conference president he once organized and personally bore the expense of a full-blown second graduation service for an academy senior who had been barred from the regular ceremonies due to a minor infraction late in her final semester. He possesses “strong inspirational and motivational skills,” according to a union conference president who marveled at the skill Schneider recently displayed quickly winning over a group of upset people.

Although he possesses the advantages of a successful youth leader, Schneider may have to overcome perception of potential liabilities. Will his jocund manner and focus on simple themes be adequate to deal with the complexity of the issues the division faces? Such concerns, however, do not appear to register very prominently, because the new president is viewed in hopeful terms from a variety of sectors in the North American church.

The Process

It's a different story, however, when it comes to the election process. Here reports of undue influence exerted by a wealthy church member combine with longstanding concerns about the lack of information and mechanisms needed to nominate committee members and delegates so they can have meaningful input and make informed decisions.

Some delegates and observers in Toronto were outraged at reports that Garwin McNeilus, a contractor from Minnesota who has given large sums to support various world mission endeavors of the Church, had taken measures in the NAD caucus to block election of one of the three top vote getters for president. Moreover, in remarks to the NAD caucus of the nominating committee General Conference president Jan Paulsen reportedly had given voice to McNeilus's threats.

McNeilus's antipathy was directed toward Charles Sandefur, president of the Mid-America Union. In 1995, McNeilus had unsuccessfully lobbied against Sandefur's election as Mid-America president, employing lawyers to produce a two hundred-plus page document that criticized Sandefur's involvement in the

partnership between Adventist and Roman Catholic health care entities in the Denver area formed in 1995 while Sandefur was president of the Rocky Mountain Conference. McNeilus warned that if the nominating committee in Toronto designated Sandefur as NAD president, he would mount opposition to the nomination from the floor. Such opposition is almost unheard of and would have been enormously disruptive. The delegates meeting as a whole almost always confirm the names recommended for office by the nominating committee.

The specter of such disruption was apparently a factor that prompted General Conference president Jan Paulsen to take an unusual measure to influence the NAD caucus's choice for president. On Sunday afternoon Paulsen had been present at a special meeting in which each of the 175 members of the NAD delegation was invited to express their views to the seventeen-member NAD caucus of the nominating committee about the qualities desired in a division president. There, Paulsen had allayed concerns aroused by a rumor that, with regard to the selection of the NAD president, he would invoke a clause in the General Conference bylaws that required the GC president's approval of candidates for vice president of the General Conference (division presidents are also GC vice presidents).

When he met with the NAD nominating committee caucus, though, Paulsen did make clear his preference for Schneider. That, in itself, reflected standard procedure. It was unusual, however, that Paulsen took the additional step of specifically cautioning the caucus about the potential drawbacks of nominating the other two top vote getters in the first rounds of balloting. Tom Mostert of the Pacific Union Conference, he pointed out, had alienated African-American leaders over the issue of separate conferences, whereas Sandefur would arouse opposition from the floor because of his involvement with the Porter-Centura health care partnership in Denver.

Although the outcome would have almost surely been the same even if the General Conference president had not spoken to specific problems associated with Mostert and Sandefur, his action raises serious concerns. Was he the conduit through which a church member used the influence of his wealth to destroy the viable candidacy of a highly qualified church leader? It may be, as some have suggested, that Paulsen's motivation was to inform rather than to pressure—to appraise the caucus of the realities of the situation in an open and thorough manner. At best,

however, the appearances lend themselves to suspicion.

And appearances are what remain because, under the present system, the proceedings of the nominating bodies are not made public and are therefore not a matter for comment by church officials. Although "leaks" from reliable sources give glimpses into the process, a shroud of secrecy obscures much.

The process also left some disgruntlement among African-American leaders, who had favored Sandefur. Several regional conference presidents felt that the selection was determined in advance and that their influence had been closed out. That the outcome of an election would be predetermined—"cut and dried"—is not in itself perceived as unusual. However, coming at a time when other issues—such as the controversy over the denominational retirement plan—are straining race relations in the North American Church, it may, according to one source, "put the brakes on efforts to work together."

Black church leaders and Schneider nonetheless seem eager to work together amicably on the complex set of issues they face. Norman Miles, who, as Lake Region Conference president, has worked closely with Schneider over the past few years, reportedly was key in building confidence among fellow black leaders in depicting Schneider as a fair and trustworthy leader. For his part, Schneider, when, as the newly elected NAD president, was issued a routine invitation to come for the last day of the three-day regional conference ministries meeting in August, requested to be present for the entire three days.

Beyond the particulars of this election, some nominating committee members voiced general con-

cerns about the process. One conference president, although favorably impressed that Paulsen, in contrast to some other top leaders in the past, "laid it straight out" and "didn't try to hide anything," insisted on the need for procedural improvements. Nominating committee members, he pointed out, had no résumés or substantive information about the names presented to them. "Persons were selected on the basis of feeling" and vague recommendations, he observed. Moreover, he expressed amazement at Paulsen's ability to name his slate of candidates and have them all voted in, with only one exception. "When I tried to do this at my conference constituency meeting," the conference president commented, "a GC representative told me I wasn't allowed to, that this was 'rubber stamping!'"

According to Columbia Union Conference vice president Monte Sahlin, Don Schneider has played a key role in establishing current NAD priorities for evangelism, church planting, lay and youth involvement, outreach in the large cities, efforts to reclaim missing and former members, and the provision of excellent resources for local churches. As president, he is likely to sustain initiatives along these lines, and most church members could likely rally behind one or more of these general goals. Perhaps the challenge will be to empower the diverse segments of the NAD to pursue them in their own ways while maintaining unity at some core level, both within the division and with the world church. A process of decision making and electing church leaders that is more open, informed, and authentically representative might be one key to meet the challenge.

A Conversation with Don Schneider

When *Spectrum* editor Bonnie Dwyer and I met with Don Schneider in Toronto after his election, he responded to our questions, not with theoretical statements of policies or goals, but with stories—in the best fashion of a youth leader. The newly elected NAD president graciously granted *Spectrum* time for an interview on Thursday, July 6, amidst a very hectic schedule. Originally, our interview was scheduled between interviews with *Christianity Today* and CBS radio. However, when the *Christianity Today* interview ran late, Bonnie and I opted to wait until after the CBS interview rather than take a shortened time slot between the two. The decision paid off—Schneider ended up giving us almost an hour rather than the originally agreed upon fifteen minutes.

His responses illustrate the qualities we had heard about from others: warmth, openness, simplicity, a gospel- and evangelism-centered spirituality, and the communication skills of a great story teller. When Schneider's associate, Celeste Ryan, discreetly pointed out that our interview had lasted over forty-five minutes, I could scarcely believe so much time had passed.

I concluded that the best way to convey briefly the key points of the conversation would be to tell the story of how Schneider responded to questions on the following themes.

On his thoughts and feelings upon being elected Schneider gave a frank and detailed description of the process in the seventeen-member NAD caucus:

While setting the scene for what happened when he found out about his nomination, Schneider told us that there were three names in the final round of voting: himself, Tom Mostert of the Pacific Union, who came in second, and Chuck Sandefur of the Mid-America Union, who came in third. At that point, committee members used voting machines, and Schneider commented that when he saw on the screen that he had a majority, he “lost it:” overcome with emotion, he wept and prayed.

The new president seemed deeply gratified that Mostert and Sandefur were the first to speak after the nomination and express their support. “Can you imagine how much that meant?” he asked.

On the developments in North American Adventism between now and 2005 that he would most like to see noted at the next General Conference Session:

Citing a study published in *Trustee* magazine that highlighted “knowing Jesus” as a factor in making hospital executives successful, Schneider drew a parallel between his personal spiritual goals and his desires for the Church in North America. Schneider wants most to see “members who, number one, know Jesus; and second, who will tell someone else about it.” He sees these basic spiritual commitments as the most important factors for the NAD to be able to report great growth in 2005.

On the greatest problems and challenges that face the Church:

Schneider recalled engaging a telemarketer in a conversation about her life situation and spiritual needs, and finally praying with her over the phone, rather than simply viewing her as an annoyance to be dismissed as quickly as possible. He sees that kind of concern for the spiritual needs of others as the antidote to “ritualism”—the first problem that came to his mind. Here the NAD president again expressed his foremost priority: “a church full of people who present Jesus.”

On women’s ordination:

“We need everybody,” Schneider declared. He referred to his daughter’s recent commission as a teacher in the Adventist school system and stated that he “wouldn’t want to do anything to discourage her” (and by implication young women like her). On the other hand, he expressed hope that we will “keep the

focus on doing the work, not on titles.”

On the North American Division’s relationship to the world church:

Schneider was open about tensions. He referred to the unusual questioning of his name that took place in the General Conference nominating committee. Typically, he pointed out, names referred to the whole nominating committee by divisional caucuses sail through unquestioned. But when his name came up, a delegate from another division demanded to be able to interrogate him about the NAD’s loyalty to the policies of the world church (according to another nominating committee member the specific issue was loyalty to the world policy against women’s ordination). Having left the room because his name was up for voting, Schneider started to go back to respond but then was told to wait. Other NAD nominating committee members gave assurances that Schneider believes in church policy, while another pointed out that the NAD had not questioned names presented by the other divisions. The committee then voted for Schneider, but he expressed sadness that “the loyalty of the NAD was suspect.”

The NAD president then held up a Canadian five dollar bill and outlined the basic conflict between the influence of North American dollars and that of the ever-increasing dominance in membership and representation of other, rapidly growing divisions of the world church. Schneider pointed out that, due to the diminishing proportion of NAD delegates—along with new quotas for lay and nonadministrative church employee delegates as well as ethnic and gender representation—it took special requests and maneuvers for all NAD conference presidents to be delegates at the Toronto session. Previously, NAD conference presidents could have assumed they would have seats as delegates. “Conference presidents whose conferences provide large amounts of dollars are not happy about the prospect of being left out of the General Conference delegation,” Schneider observed. Furthermore, though this time all nine NAD union presidents were among the seventeen NAD members of the nominating committee in Toronto, “this may be the last time they all make it.”

“We face a real tension here,” he concluded. “I don’t have easy answers.”

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Building a World That Respects Religious Differences

By Derek H. Davis and Charles A. McDaniel Jr.



Photo: Thomas Osborn

After having witnessed the devastation of much of the former Yugoslavia caused by ethnic and religious hatred, the rest of the world is left wondering how such a society can ever be rebuilt. The antipathy of Serb for Croat, of Muslim for Serb, of Croat for Muslim, reinforced by centuries of atrocities perpetrated by all sides, has contributed to what many believe is a hopelessly dysfunctional culture. Although it is impossible to distill the religious element from other influences and determine its exact significance in this conflict, there can be no question that the religious history of the Balkans plays a substantial role in the perpetuation of bloodshed. The perceived complicity of the Roman Catholic Church in the Croats' persecution of the Orthodox Serbs in World War II undoubtedly has contributed to the violent legacy that fuels modern atrocities. Similarly stoking the fires of religious hatred is the Serbs' self-image as the protectors of Christendom, believers that their armies still exist as the last barrier to an Islamic Europe. And Muslims perceive in their Christian neighbors a remnant of the crusaders—blood lustful zealots whose faith calls for the slaughter of women and children in the name of their messiah.

The intractability of religious influence in the Balkans greatly complicates the present stalemate and poses some dangerous questions for world leaders. Will the current precarious truce, imposed only by the incessancy of NATO bombing, hold after the departure of the international peacekeeping force? Will the bitterness that has for so long fueled holy war in the Balkans be contained to that region or will it spill over into neighboring states in Eastern Europe and Central Asia? The immediacy of these questions overshadows the more difficult and important issue of whether this war-torn society can ever begin a meaningful process of healing so that there might be at least the hope of a lasting peace.

Far from isolated, cultures of religious violence fortified by ancient hatred like that of the Balkans are found on every continent in countries large and small, industrialized and impoverished. Similar questions concerning religious-political stability may be asked about nations as diverse as Ireland, Sudan, Kashmir, Sri Lanka, the Indonesian country of East Timor, and countless other places where decades, even centuries, of religious persecution have established seemingly insurmountable obstacles to the maintenance of social order. One atrocity begets another in an endless cycle of violence that emanates from humankind's most deeply held convictions. Repetitions of religiously inspired brutality bring to mind Rousseau's dark comment about the impossibility of living together with those one believes to be damned. How is it possible to envision a world that respects religious differences when, in reality, much of the world would be satisfied simply by the suspension of slaughter in the name of truth?

This essay examines the possibility of building a world whose people respect the religious beliefs and practices of others. Identification of past successes in the reconciliation of religious rivals is key to the construction of such a world, just as is the admission of past failures—and there have been many. Institutional impediments to religious freedom have often silenced, or worse, inflamed dialogue between religious groups and deepened animosities between them. The construction of a religiously respectful world requires that these social and political structures must be understood and overcome. To that end, some ideas will be presented for facilitating religious understanding between peoples that presupposes a world order sympathetic to religious reconciliation, if for no other reason than to achieve a self-interested peace. However, construction of this religiously respectful world requires a positive project built on active intervention and responsible risk taking by collective world authorities. Ancient hatreds that contribute to our present situation have not, and will not, resolve themselves. However, if there is indeed a new world order and that order is receptive to learning from past mistakes and willing to courageously take action when called for, the task of bringing about religious peace both within and between nations may not be as hopeless as it often seems.

Impediments to Building a Religiously Respectful World

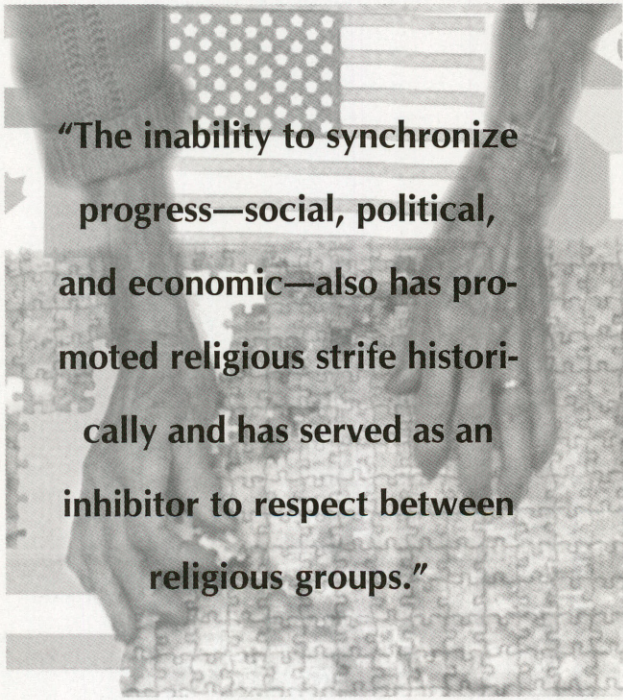
Efforts to promote harmony among religions must take into account cultural inhibitors that have doomed such attempts in the past. These impediments are diverse, existing as basic social values and attitudes, as entrenched institutional interests, and as complex philosophical movements.

One of the most fundamental obstacles is the simple *lack of respect for those of differing beliefs*.¹ Simply stated, the traditionally provincial nature of human thinking about religion often prohibits mutual understanding and leads to conflict. With respect to institutional interests, the *political power and influence of major religions* often has served to restrict the free expression of religious minorities. Countless examples testify to the fact that organized religion is frequently its own enemy with regard to achieving progress in religious liberty. *Political insensitivity* also has served as an impediment to efforts aimed at bridging religious differences. The various institutions of society—social, legal, political—must achieve some sort of synchronicity in the march toward a religiously respectful world. No measure of judicial decisions or legislative fiat, even if overwhelmingly favorable to the cause of religious liberty, will overcome an educational system, for example, with an entrenched bias against religious freedom. Likewise, educational efforts tailored to promote respect for the beliefs and practices of all faiths among society's youth can be dashed by the zealous political agenda of a dominant, religiously centered group.

Recently, the *communitarian revival* that has become prominent in the United States has emerged as a threat to hard-fought gains in the fight for religious freedom and respect. Although the communitarian ideology offers insights into some of the problems that plague modern society, it must not be used as an excuse for retreat into exclusive worldviews that aid in the formation of hostile camps and that exacerbate differences between religious groups. Similarly, the *rise of postmodernism* in rebellion against what is perceived as modernist relativism has established its own impediment to religious respect. Postmodernism's attempt to deconstruct foundations for all knowledge and truth claims has the potential to take on political expression such that it would deny the fundamental rights of others in their own pursuit

of truth. If, in the postmodernist view, no foundations for truth are legitimate, then legal protections for such "illegitimate" worldviews are unnecessary.

At the heart of religious difference is theology; yet, theological differences often transcend religious boundaries. The absolute dependence on divine intervention for human salvation in Christianity and the more historicist conception of the chosen people in Judaism clash with ideals of human perfectibility in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism, and these differences find social and political expression that contribute to intercultural conflict. Theological differences and misunderstandings taint



"The inability to synchronize progress—social, political, and economic—also has promoted religious strife historically and has served as an inhibitor to respect between religious groups."

communications between cultures that make such conflict inevitable. Paul Tillich illustrated beautifully the nature of such cultural disconnects when he observed of the relationship between Christian and non-Christian cultures that "it is not so much that they [non-Christians] reject the Christian answer, as that . . . they do not ask the questions to which the [Christian] gives the answer."² Tillich's singular statement goes a long way toward explaining past failures in the missionary policies of American Christian churches. Supporting Tillich's claim, Joseph Kitagawa noted that "[t]he most ironic dimension of the missionary enterprise was the romantic thinking of some missionaries whose well-intentioned but excessive sentimentality led them to think that Christians in non-Western lands should become carbon copies of Western Christians, with only their skin color remaining different."³ A principal source of the Western paternalism that ultimately undermined Christian

missionary efforts was a fundamental lack of respect for difference—cultural, racial, and theological.

The period of Western colonial expansion still serves as a testament to the power of political and economic influence in denying genuine religious understanding between peoples. This era witnessed Christian missionaries aiding in the indoctrination, and even the enslavement, of indigenous populations to Western institutions and customs. Bishop Desmond Tutu described the injustice of this era:

The missionaries were bringing the lights of the Gospel to the dark continent. These poor native pagans had to be clothed in Western clothes so that they could speak to the White man's God, the only God, who was obviously unable to recognize them unless they were decently clad. These poor creatures must be made to sing the White man's hymns hopelessly and badly translated, they had to worship in the White man's unemotional and individualistic way. . . .⁴

There is evidence, however, that such attitudes are abating. Indeed, modern Africa reflects many of the changes that have taken place and that have begun to religiously reshape the world. The isolation and cultural naiveté that supported the colonizing of African souls by European and American missionaries is being eradicated by modern communication technology. African traditional religions are now putting their own mark on Occidental Christian theology that many African people have long seen as culturally biased and, consequently, theologically compromised.⁵

Still, fear and ignorance remain the principal antagonists to a religiously respectful world. These influences often foster withdrawal, providing a haven for those unwilling to go beyond themselves and their own preconceptions. Especially prevalent in the Islamic world is a "fear of anomie" that results from what is perceived as unbridled modernism and the accelerating pace of technological and social change.⁶ Modernism seems to stimulate a response from Islam proportionate to the intensity and pervasiveness of the change it inflicts upon Islamic society. Nazi Ayubi has observed of "political Islam"—that force that incorporates the Islamic religion as "a partner in the process of state-building"—that it appears principally to be "a response to regimes that are avowedly more modernist and secularizing."⁷

Yet, there is obvious ambiguity in many Islamic

societies toward Western culture. Jeff Haynes has observed that, despite Western misperceptions, there is a "relatively low appeal of fundamentalists electorally" in Muslim countries for the fact that fundamentalists are perceived as "likely to be highly restrictive of personal freedoms."⁸ Recent events in Iran and even in Afghanistan support Haynes's conclusion and demonstrate that there is some attraction to the Western lifestyle and its values for many Muslims in these countries. Equally obvious, however, is the attraction to more traditional elements of Islam that often foster a deep distrust or even disdain for Western culture. Acknowledging this ambiguity is a necessary step in building a world that respects religious differences.

The inability to synchronize progress—social, political, and economic—also has promoted religious strife historically and has served as an inhibitor to respect between religious groups. Discontinuities in the development of society give the appearance of injustice, and this lack of synchronization in social development often appears to conform to religious boundaries in separating the "haves" from the "have-nots." Muslims in Europe, Christians in Sudan and Indonesia, and peoples of indigenous faith traditions throughout Africa and Central and South America all have experienced social and economic discrimination that has denied them the material advantages of modern culture. Such discrimination inflames already sensitive religious differences and prevents conciliation. It is acknowledged that socioeconomic progress never will be synchronized perfectly. However, those attempting to build a religiously respectful world must recognize and be willing to address the appearance of injustice brought about by the dislocation inevitable in modernization.

Scholars have observed another impediment to religious liberty in the absence of a conception of human rights in non-Western cultures.⁹ However, humbly, Westerners must recognize that a principal reason for the association of the rise in the ideology and language of human rights with the West has been the prevalence of human rights abuses in Western history. The Treaty of Westphalia that ended the Thirty Years War and positioned individual nation-states as dominant in place of the once "trans-national authority of the Church" brought an end to thirteen centuries of Christendom and its untold abuses.¹⁰ Scott Thomas's observation that separation of church and state is "simply not part of the political culture of the Third World" should surprise no one.¹¹ The remarkable project of Locke, Jefferson, Paine, and others came

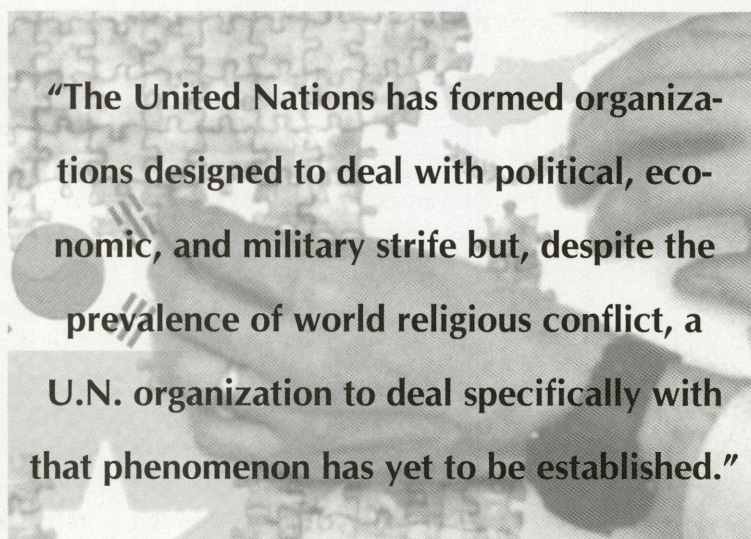
about only on virgin soil and after intense reflection on the imperfections of past social systems that gave rise to the abuse of basic human rights. Even in the environment of the New World, the tendency toward religious establishment remained strong. Westerners who are rightfully proud of their accomplishments in the development of the religious liberty ideal should retain some humility by acknowledging that religious rights are still violated even in Western nations. The West must be encouraging and dutiful without condescension and without resorting to bullying tactics in the promotion of liberty to nations that do not enjoy the tradition of religious freedom.

Exacerbating the difficulty in building a religiously respectful world is recognition that the environment for this intricate and quite delicate construction project grows more indeterminate by the hour. Attempts at religious peacemaking occur in the presence of powerful, though often subtle, forces of globalization and technological advance that are affecting the homogenization of ethnic and religious groups, which often have deep-seated hatred for one another. Fear of "monoculture"—modernism's homogenization of peoples around modern technological values that threaten traditional cultural boundaries—is already inspiring certain conservative religious groups to lash back. In addition, technology is effecting change not simply at the level of cultural values but also at the most basic foundations of our collective self-understanding—those of biology and anthropology. A study published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* found a genetic link between Jews and Palestinians that extends back some four thousand years, a finding that, although perhaps lending credibility to Old Testament genealogy, also has the potential of complicating modern diplomacy.¹² Scientific discoveries that change our understanding about the historical relationship between cultures and those new technologies that increase the potential exploitation of the developing world by industrialized countries add to the volatility inherent in bringing together peoples of diverse nationality, ethnicity, and religion.

Past Failures to Ancient Dilemmas

The flaws in past attempts to resolve religious conflict are as numerous as the specific instances of such

conflict that are observed in the world today. One may begin identifying the defects with the observation that few if any authoritative international bodies are charged specifically with the task of addressing religious discord. The United Nations has formed organizations designed to deal with political, economic, and military strife but, despite the prevalence of world religious conflict, a U.N. organization to deal specifically with that phenomenon has yet to be established. Special rapporteurs have been assigned to investigate charges of religious rights abuse (recently in Germany, for example, which was accused of violating the rights of Scientologists and other



religious minorities); yet, a formal organization whose principal purpose is to facilitate the resolution of religious hostility or the resolution of church-state conflict does not exist. So, we must concede at the outset that the international framework to support such a monumental task is simply not in place.

Perhaps as a result of the absence of such a framework, modern efforts at religious peacemaking have too often taken on the appearance, if not the actual form, of police actions. Painfully obvious in modern attempts to promote religious reconciliation has been the overdependence on international peacekeepers—men and women who are often placed in socially complex and volatile environments and expected to act as both policing agents and social workers. Members of these forces are generally ill prepared for such missions, lacking knowledge of local languages and customs, having little experience as participants in multinational peacekeeping efforts, and serving under tentative world leadership. Tenuous standoffs in Palestine and Kosovo illustrate futility in

the mission of occupational forces brought in after prolonged periods of religious violence. Though such forces exist as something of a necessary evil, they must be seen as the most temporal of solutions to the most intransigent and transcendent of problems. The very presence of blue-helmeted peacekeepers serves notice that something is very much amiss in the social-political-religious structure of the culture to which they have been introduced. Their presence often adds another element of antagonism that further destabilizes social order. Still, such forces undoubtedly will continue to be pressed into service for the very lack of internationally agreed-upon alternatives.

The potential venues for international peacekeepers, even when narrowed to regions that experience specifically religious conflict, seem limitless. They could be used to separate Christian Armenians from Muslim Azerbaijanis in the Caucasus, to suppress the cyclical resurgence of Catholic-Protestant violence in Northern Ireland, to deter assassination attempts by Sikhs and Hindus in the now nuclear Punjab, and to prevent Shiites in Iran from hanging Baha'is who refuse to convert to Islam, to name only a few possibilities.¹³ The sad fact, however, is that the blue helmets have come to symbolize the limitations of such peacekeeping missions. These are police actions that can accomplish little more than to deter immediate violence and subtly soothe the embarrassment of the modern world. The peacekeepers are pacifiers meant to mask and understate the world's religious hatred so that modern states can interact and their industrial economies transact in relative and ignorant peace. Consequently, international forces have become defeatist symbols that represent the extreme difficulty of bringing about religious peace and instilling respect for human rights coterminously in regions of the world where such values are unknown.

Another flaw in modern attempts to bridge religious conflict has been the generally narrow focus of such efforts. Getting rival leaders to address their differences at the peace table is a significant step toward mutual respect; yet, it is only one step. The unending hostilities between Jews and Muslims in the Middle East testify to the limitations of political efforts that focus narrowly on specific issues. Respect for religious and human rights must move in concert with a larger social vision for there to be the possibility of a lasting peace. However, Irene Bloom has observed critical differences in religious and secular thinking about "rights" that make such movement difficult. Bloom observes of religion that there is "an

unmistakable particularism involved not only in the ways religious doctrines are preserved and transmitted but in the ways religious communities are defined and organized." About human rights thinking, however, it is "commonly presented as conceptually unencumbered, being modern and Western in its origins, secularistic in its persuasions, and, above all, universal in its claims."¹⁴ Bloom's observations suggest that a more contextual mode of human rights thinking is called for in which unique cultural complexities are addressed to include the ways in which those complexities differ from Western preconceptions.

Abstracting human rights issues from their cultural context undoubtedly has contributed to difficulties in reconciling differences between the Muslim world and Western societies. Theocratic factions within Islam reject the possibility of religious pluralism found in the Western liberal state, and the common linkage of religious tradition between Islam and Christianity only worsens the resulting tension. To many Muslim fundamentalists, Christians are not of another faith but are apostates of "the" faith—Trinitarian heretics of the one true monotheistic religion. It follows then that popular sovereignty that is the basis of most Western governments is considered by many Muslim groups to usurp the divine authority of God. Such ideological differences are not like petty squabbles over geographic boundaries. They extend to the very core beliefs of societies and the philosophies around which they are ordered.

The ideological disconnect between Islam and the West represents the fact that a delicate balancing act inevitably will exist between allowing a sufficient degree of religious particularism to enable the preservation of traditional identities and simultaneously ensure that the practices of those groups being preserved do not infringe upon individuals and other groups in society.

Finally, efforts at building a religiously respectful world often have become subsumed under and subordinated to the goal of achieving social justice. Shivesh Thakur has observed that it is a "mistake to regard religion as a tool of social justice."¹⁵ There is an essential paradox between the two, for "social justice is about the distribution of 'social goods'—liberty and opportunity, income and wealth, and so on; and religion is about turning our attention away from merely earthly concerns and towards a transcendent, other-worldly order of being and values. . . ."¹⁶ Here, Thakur has captured the dualistic element that has served to sabotage many attempts in the achievement of religious respect. In the

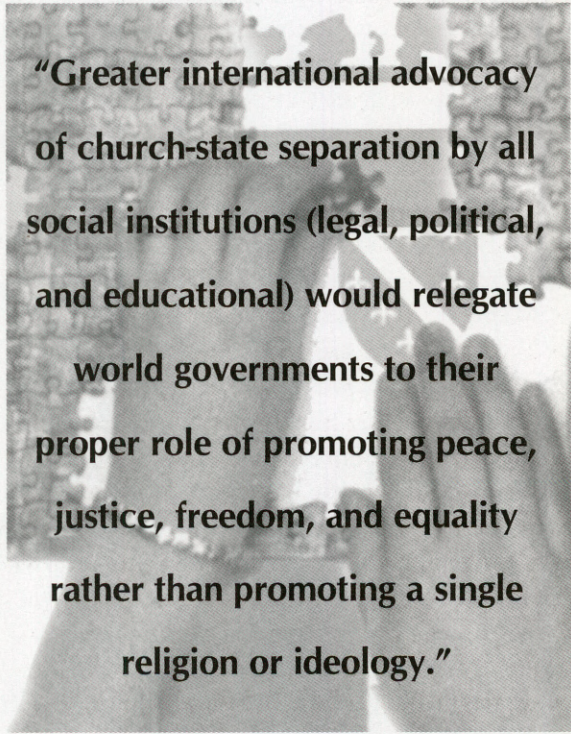
United States, for example, the Social Gospel movement was the synthesizing of Christian theology and social justice run amok. The movement was an attempt to harmoniously reconcile ideologies that must necessarily exist in some state of tension (as Thakur observed), and it was doomed to its disappearance for its utopian aspirations. Amelioration of social and political inequities does not address the mutual recognition of the "other" as heathen. The larger question is: Can true religious respect exist where one group believes that those outside its own religious culture are hopelessly mistaken in their ultimate beliefs, irrespective of social and economic differences?

Religions are flawed human institutions with sacred cores, and the clash of the sacred between religions and the inability to delineate sacred from temporal elements within religions has precipitated as many wars as the existence of social injustice. The methods used in attempting to bridge religious differences likely will differ from those developed in the pursuit of social justice, though often they will complement one another. History is replete with past efforts that confused the quest for political order and social justice with religious respect in attempting to bridge religious barriers. These efforts were throttled by the "isms" that were the underlying constructs of such bridges: Roman Catholic paternalism teamed with imperialistic mercantilism; Protestant realism and zealous anticommunism; religious ecumenism and global capitalism. All these constructs ultimately have proven unstable for religious bridge-building, though doubtless that was never their sole intention. Not coincidentally, they all suffer from the same structural flaw—a common disrespect for the traditions of those communities to which bridges were attempting to be built.

It should be noted, however, that not all historic efforts at religious reconciliation have been abysmal failures. A period of global ecumenism that extended through much of the twentieth century contributed disproportionately (in historical terms) to the formation of institutions to help bring about peace between the world's religions. The original World's Parliament of Religions was held in Chicago in 1893 as part of the Columbian Exposition—a long forgotten but important event in world religious history in which one of the founding principles was that no religious group would be pressured into sacrificing its truth claims.¹⁷ In 1944, the Federal Council of Churches created the Commission to Study the Bases of a Just and Durable Peace whose chairman was the eminent John Foster Dulles. The Commission developed the

"Six Pillars of Peace," which mixed tactical measures such as the "reformation of global treaties" and "control of military establishments" with more abstract principles like "autonomy for subject peoples" and the "right of individuals everywhere to religious and intellectual liberty."¹⁸ Another group, the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA) was highly influential in the passage of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations in 1948.¹⁹

In addition to the Universal Declaration, three other significant international documents were developed in the twentieth century with the aim of



"Greater international advocacy of church-state separation by all social institutions (legal, political, and educational) would relegate world governments to their proper role of promoting peace, justice, freedom, and equality rather than promoting a single religion or ideology."

promoting principles of religious liberty: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966); the U.N. Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religious Belief (1981); and the Vienna Concluding Document (1989).²⁰ Each of these documents addresses abuses of religious freedom by expounding certain rights thought to be of such significance that they should be universally applicable to the world's citizenry. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, for example, states that "[e]veryone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion," and it insists that "[n]o one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice." Similarly, article 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political

Rights prohibits incitement of hatred against others because of their religion and protects religious minorities from being denied the enjoyment of their own culture.

Yet each of these documents suffers from the same limitations. They are not "self-executing" in that these "rights" documents are not automatically enforceable upon a given nation; they must be enacted through each nation's own political and judicial processes. Secondly, they are not active in the sense that they do not initiate and promote cultural initiatives designed to address religious conflict and abuse. They are statements of principles that the majority of the world finds agreeable with respect to the religious liberty of all citizens.

Similar efforts in the development of religious and human rights documents continue today though they are often overlooked perhaps because of their often vague declarations and the perception that past attempts to influence societies have been failures, as observed in the continuation of religious persecution and human rights abuse. The 1993 Parliament of the World's Religions appointed a commission headed by Swiss Catholic theologian Hans Kung that drafted a declaration called "Toward a Global Ethic." The declaration condemned all "aggression and hatred in the name of religion" and reinforced previous statements of the Parliament in support of religious freedom.²¹ Yet, the question must be asked, What truly can be accomplished by essentially powerless international organizations that issue general condemnations of unspecified behavior? Groups that genuinely seek solutions must be willing to get down-and-dirty in working to transform the very human institutions from which religious hatred emanates.

Models for Construction of a Religiously Respectful World

How then should we avoid the failures of past attempts and initiate a positive project of building a world that respects religious differences?

Of special concern, how can we begin the process of reparation in societies where religious conflict is endemic? In societies where religious hatred runs deep and violence is commonplace, enactment of legislation and participation in international treaties will have limited immediate effects on the institutions of the society from which conflict emanates. These

cultures require more active programs tailored specifically to their own needs and facilitated by international groups organized to address such conflict.

The religious history of any culture is indelible. Persecutions and pogroms leave historical imprints that endure and generate grievances that, left unresolved, fester into bitter, pan-generational hatred. Yet, cultural wounds can be healed. A positive model for such reconciliation exists in South Africa's Commission on Truth and Reconciliation, established in October 1994 to help bring together those groups so long separated by the ethnic alienation enforced by apartheid. The commission is brutally honest in its approach, being founded on six basic principles: (1) to gain a comprehensive understanding of all human rights abuses under the apartheid system; (2) to grant amnesty to those who make full disclosure; (3) to allow victims to tell their stories to the world; (4) to restore "human and civil dignity" to victims; (5) to report to the nation the commission's findings; and, (6) to make recommendations as to the prevention of future violations.²²

These sessions of national confession have at times been excruciatingly painful, with the result that Bishop Desmond Tutu, head of the commission, has himself "quite seriously wondered how much truth we can tolerate."²³ Yet, the relative paucity of violence during the transition of political power in South Africa serves as testimony to the power of individual and institutional confession. And, the inclusion of religious influence in the development and operations of the commission (Bishop Tutu is Anglican and each session of the commission begins with Christian, Jewish, or Muslim prayer) has perhaps signaled a new era in the mobilization of religious resources for peacemaking purposes. It is said that the model for justice that the commission is attempting to achieve is not "retributive" but rather the "restorative" justice of Jesus Christ. L. Gregory Jones has commented that the commission is "one of the most dramatic and hopeful signs of an authentically Christian approach to political life to emerge in many years."²⁴

It is in this fostering of an attitude of national repentance that one can observe stark differences between the situations in South Africa and Kosovo. In South Africa, the infusion of repentance, a value associated with Christianity, into a secular commission whose end purpose is the restoration of human rights and the initiation of national healing, has brought about significant results. By contrast, Walter Wink has described NATO's attempt to coerce Serbian repentance through violence as counterproductive,

engendering even more animus and lessening the prospects for peace. Ominously, the United Nations' efforts in the reconstruction of Kosovo to date have emphasized legal, political, and economic priorities to the exclusion of ethnic and religious initiatives. Judiciary panels have been established but, in contrast to South Africa, these legal structures are far more concerned with the prosecution of war crimes than the facilitation of repentance and healing. Even with its more limited agenda, the U.N. has had great difficulty constructing an impartial judiciary and in compensating judges adequately to minimize the possibility of corruption.²⁵

However, one might properly observe that the South African experiment attempts to heal damage done primarily by racial and ethnic violence. Can this model be extended to address the special needs of religious reconciliation? Are there examples in the modern world where such a process of institutional confession has been used to promote the healing of wounds inflicted by religious persecution? Can such a process be used to engender genuine respect for the people, institutions, and practices of other religions? The Roman Catholic Church appears unilaterally to have begun a similar, though smaller scale, program to reconcile itself with those who historically have been subject to its abuse of power. Pope John Paul II has issued decrees of apology for the Church's sins of commission and omission in the face of Nazi atrocities toward Jews and other persecuted groups in World War II. A process of mutual confession with the intention of reconciliation also could be attempted in an effort to bring together the long divided Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox communions. Though a papal apology for the sack of Constantinople in 1204 would border on the absurd, there are legitimate grievances for hostilities the memories of which have lingered into modern times and that have perpetuated the division between these churches. The reconciliation of two of the world's largest religious institutions would be a hopeful sign that, even after centuries of hostility, peace is possible.

Perhaps a more relevant model is found in Israel and its efforts to develop a "multi-disciplinary peace curriculum" for its tenth grade students in attempting to bridge the differences between Jews and Palestinians. This peace curriculum consists of courses in sociology, history, and literature, combined with classroom encounters between Jewish and Palestinian students

and in-service teacher training.²⁶ Thus far, the program has included thirty-two Israeli and Palestinian schools, around two hundred teachers, and approximately three thousand tenth grade students. Interestingly, Sarah Harel, director of the Ministry of Education's department for peace initiatives, credits a program developed for schools in Northern Ireland that was designed to resolve Catholic-Protestant differences for serving as a model for the Israeli program.²⁷ In the Irish school initiative, Protestant children are asked to analyze a Catholic narrative and Catholic students examine a Protestant narrative. The two groups then come together to develop a proposal for reconciliation, sharing ideas in planning their joint rapprochement project.

Another important development in Israeli peace initiatives has been recognition of the role of language in fostering peace and, consequently, the promotion of instruction in Arabic for Jewish students. Currently, Israeli Arabs are well versed in Hebrew by the time they enter high school. However, Jewish students traditionally do not learn Arabic even though the language is spoken by a large segment of the population.²⁸ Bridging the language divide is a key element of the Israeli peace initiative.

A third component of the peace program is the establishment of Arab-Jewish community centers that sponsor various projects, including a "Festival of Holidays" in which Arab, Christian, and Jewish holidays are celebrated. The festival, "symbolizing coexistence and understanding, offers exhibits of works of art, fairs, concerts, and an international conference of religious leaders."²⁹ Recognition of the sacred symbols, beliefs, and practices of religious groups is essential to the development of respect between religiously diverse peoples, and the content of the Israeli peace initiatives acknowledges this fact.

It is suggested here that a hybrid of the South African and Israeli peace programs described above may be a workable answer to facilitate religious understanding between peoples, especially in regions where violence is historically entrenched. The population of a religiously torn society must never be viewed as a homogeneous entity. Older generations that have experienced violence firsthand often may require an extensive period of national confession and healing similar to that being undertaken in South Africa to heal the wounds of apartheid. Younger generations, who have witnessed or experienced less direct religious persecution but who have been acculturated to the prejudices of their ancestors, may be more recep-

tive to educational and intercultural initiatives like those underway in Israel. A combination of these methods that targets distinct population groups allows different cultural segments to undergo therapies specific to that group's needs. Older populations that must overcome lifetimes of bitter memories are allowed to progress more slowly toward tolerance before more aggressive educational efforts are begun. However, younger individuals who have experienced little in the way of direct persecution (or have yet to persecute) will move into more advanced stages of the reparation process more quickly.

There must be sensitivity to the fact that these generational groups necessarily interact, so each program must prepare its participants for that interaction. Openness is critical. Older individuals must be made aware that their children and grandchildren are being educated in the languages and traditions of those of other faiths with whom they must live. Likewise, truthful explanations must be given to younger groups for the confessional stage through which their parents and grandparents are progressing. The purpose of peacekeepers, the history of violence, the reasons for a particular group's persecution or isolation . . . nothing should be withheld from public scrutiny.

Conditioning the International Community

The models illustrated in the South African and Middle Eastern experience should not be interpreted as panaceas; however, they do represent encouraging signs of an elevation of thought in the resolution of ethnic and religious conflict that acknowledges cultural realities. Other, more general, steps also are required to prepare the international community for religious reconciliation.

Basic steps must be taken to establish a climate of religious liberty worldwide apart from action that targets reparation of damage done by religious conflict in specific cultures. The first of these steps is the implementation of existing treaties that govern human and religious rights.³⁰ Unfortunately, the United States has been neglectful in this area and has been rightly chastised for preaching human rights while being unwilling to bind itself to certain human rights provisions of international treaties. The United States could set an example for the world by implementing article 18 of the 1981 International Cov-

enant on Civil and Political Rights.

As an extension, governments around the world should be more proactive in developing and enacting their own legislation designed to stop religious persecution and promote religious freedom. Agencies within governments should be formed and assigned the task to oversee the implementation of such legislation.

Third, a greater emphasis on educating the world on the prevalence and severity of religious persecution is called for. More conferences and symposia developed for this expressed purpose would help inform the world's citizens of the intransigence of religious persecution and of the need to dedicate more resources to work toward its elimination. Established human rights organizations such as Human Rights Watch, Christian Solidarity International, and the International Religious Liberty Association could be more active in developing and supporting such an educational initiative.

Finally, greater international advocacy of church-state separation by all social institutions (legal, political, and educational) would relegate world governments to their proper role of promoting peace, justice, freedom, and equality rather than promoting a single religion or ideology. Educational institutions particularly can be important in helping to instill in the culture a basic understanding and respect for the importance of separation of powers and its consequences for individual liberty. The lessons of history are invaluable as an instructional tool in such an endeavor.

The introduction of models for religious reconciliation, the reinforcement of international treaties and "rights" documents, and the attempts to revalue social institutions in favor of religious liberty must not be clouded by a naive idealism. Reinhold Niebuhr's words remain instructive in delimiting realistic from idealistic outcomes in the attempts to reconcile peoples and their traditions:

I persevere in the effort to combine the ethic of Jesus with what might be called Greek caution. . . . I might claim for such a strategy the full authority of the gospel except that it seems to me more likely to avoid dishonesty if one admits that the principle of love is not qualified in the gospel and that it must be qualified in other than the most intimate human associations. When one deals with the affairs of civilization, one is trying to make the principle of love as effective as far as possible, but one cannot escape the

conclusion that society as such is brutal, and that the Christian principle may never be more than a leaven in it.³¹

We must, like Niebuhr, forever be mindful that though the world's nations and their respective religions engage each other with messages of peace, the shadow of nuclear missiles reflects the intransigence of political ideologies and ensures that survival retains its preeminence. Any attempt to bridge differences between religious groups must be carried out with a reverence constantly mindful of Cardinal Newman's words: "O how we hate one another for the love of God."

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Political Challenges the Church Cannot Afford to Ignore

by Tihomir Kukolja

“There is no place for racism, elitism, and nationalism within the family of faith. They don’t belong in the church,” General Conference president Jan Paulsen said during his Sabbath sermon at the Adventist World Session in Toronto, Canada.¹ Because there was no discussion of these issues during the session, his statement only hinted at a growing problem for an expanding worldwide church. Adventists can no longer claim political innocence or indifference when their countries are plunged into political turmoil. In some places Adventists are involved in the conflict, and in others church leaders are being asked to assist with the resolution. During the past ten years, the church response to political conflict has varied greatly from one division to another, which raises the question, What is the appropriate church response to ethnic political conflicts?

Adventists and Unrest in the South Pacific

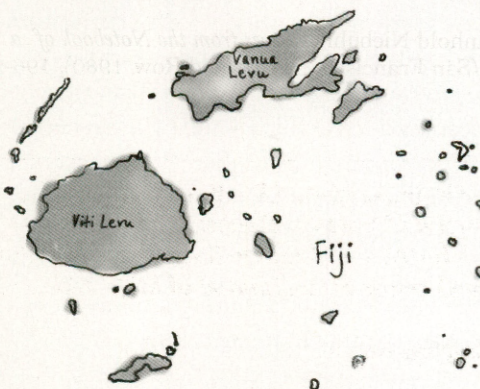
At the same time Paulsen was preaching in Toronto, in Fiji a coup was under way. Andrews University graduate George Speight, a rebel leader and indigenous Fijian with an Adventist upbringing, was holding hostage

twenty-seven members of the Fijian Parliament with a group of armed civilians, some of them current and former Adventists. The hostages included Mahendra Chaudhry, the democratically elected prime minister of Indian descent.

Throughout the coup, which began in May and lasted until July 13, Speight frequently referred to his faith in God’s providence. “Rumors in Fiji had linked the church to the coup,” according to the *South Pacific Division Record*. “On June 5, the mission ran a full page advertisement in the *Fiji Times*, the country’s largest newspaper stating the Seventh-day Adventist church opposes Mr. Speight’s actions and upholds the separation of church and state.” Adventist leaders in the region also

joined other leading churches in condemnation of the coup.

Still there were some Fijian church members who gave their support to Speight’s pro-indigenous cause. “Sympathy with the coup leader’s nationalistic objectives appears to have overridden Christian and biblical principles as they relate to our government leaders,” stated a denominational report released by the Central



Pacific Union Mission.²

Meanwhile, Adventists were leaders of another armed coup in the South Pacific, this time in the neighboring Solomon Islands, where Adventists comprise 10 percent of the country's population. There Malaitan rebels, the Malaitan Eagle Force, seized control of the capital Honiara and placed Solomon Islands prime minister Bartholomew Ulufa'alu under house arrest. Adventist lawyer Andrew Nori was the spokesperson for the Eagle Force. Some church members supported the Malaitan cause, whereas others sided with the Isatabu Freedom Movement, the rival indigenous armed group. Lawrence Tanabose, secretary of the Western Pacific Union Mission was asked by the Australian High Commission and Prime Minister Ulufa'alu to act as a mediator between the two warring factions, according to the South Pacific Division *Record*. In a matter of days, the coup was brought to an end.

However, the crisis in the South Pacific is far from over. After agreement had been reached in the Solomon Islands' parliament, Nori and his group dropped its demand for Ulufa'alu's resignation, but Nori later gave warning: "This is a war that will continue for some time." The Statement on Ethnic and Political Tensions in the South Pacific, released by the division on June 14, 2000, shared the concerns of the regional politicians, namely that the recent events in Fiji and Solomon Islands have "the potential for further crisis in the South Pacific."³

The Rwandan Massacres

The unprecedented genocide that took place in Rwanda in 1994, when members of the Hutu tribe slaughtered almost a million Tutsi people, remains current news within Adventism. At present, the International War Tribunal in Rwanda is pursuing the case against an alleged war criminal, former pastor Elizaphan Ntakirutimana, a Hutu Adventist and a denominational leader at the time of the Rwandan massacres.

The tribunal is charging Ntakirutimana and his son Gerard, also a denominational employee at that time, with genocide and crimes against humanity. According to the charges, both of the men "participated in an attack on the men, women and children"⁴ that resulted in the massacre of between five thousand and ten thousand Tutsis—fellow believers and non-Adventists alike—who had sought sanctuary in the denominational compound at the Mugonero church



and hospital complex."⁴

In March 2000, at the time of Ntakirutimana's extradition from the United States to the United Nations detention facility in Arusha, Northern Tanzania, another Rwanda murder caught the attention of international media. Assiel Kabera, an Adventist adviser to the former Rwandan president Pasteur Bizimunga, was shot dead by an unidentified gunman in the Rwandan capital of Kigali. Kabera's father was one of the seven Tutsi ministers who had pleaded for the lives of their people in a moving letter submitted to pastor Ntakirutimana one day before the Mugonero massacre. According to well-informed sources, Kabera was shot because he spoke frankly and openly about the events in 1994.⁵

Tensions Among Adventists in the Balkans

In Europe, the violent breakdown of the former Yugoslavia ten years ago eventually led to reorganization of the Adventist Church structure because of disagreements between Croatian and Serbian members.⁶ The issue became so tense that in 1992 the executive committee of the Croatian-Slovenian Conference delivered a strong statement in a document prepared for the Trans-European Division:

Belgrade has exploited its international connections too much in spreading its points [of view] concerning the leaders, church administrators and pastors of the Croatian-Slovenian Conference by presenting them as nationalists, separatists, politically minded, pro-Catholics, and sympathiz-

ers of the leading political party in Croatia. . . . It is not acceptable [any more] that Belgrade, with its interpretations and attitude towards us, [should] be considered as our spokesman and representative before the higher church structures.⁷

In mid-1992 the Church in Croatia became a separate administrative entity directly attached to the Trans-European Division and known in its initial stage as the Croatian-Slovenian Conference.

One of the issues that proved divisive was how specific to be in presenting facts about the war in Croatia. Official reporting by Yugoslavian Union leaders never addressed issues about who killed or wounded over a dozen Adventists, or damaged and destroyed a number of Adventist churches, or bombed entire villages and cities in Croatia.

Furthermore, Serbian church leaders were quick to remind colleagues in Croatia: "Brethren, this is not our war! We should not take sides!" However, when in March 1999 the NATO Allegiance launched its military campaign against Yugoslavia, the Serbian Adventists



immediately reported the conflict in their own homeland. "Our church was among the first to publish its statement against the war destructions that had fallen upon us," wrote pastor Miodrag Zivanovic, the Yugoslavian Union Conference secretary in Serbia.⁸

The actions of Serbian Adventist leaders in Yugoslavia on this count seem to be inconsistent. Furthermore, although denominational reporting that originated in Serbia had produced one story after another about civilian suffering that NATO attacks caused, reports from Kosovo were reduced to dry statistical data about the amount of humanitarian help processed by the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA).

Issues the Church Cannot Afford to Ignore

The succession of racially motivated political upheavals that have involved or affected Adventists has presented a special challenge to the worldwide church. By tradition, it has always claimed its political indifference, innocence, and neutrality. However, the worldwide Adventist Church can no longer afford to ignore the fact that Adventists in different parts of the world no longer remain indifferent when their own countries are plunged into political turmoil.

In his observation about the current situation in the South Pacific, Raymond Coombe, the public affairs and religious liberty director for the South Pacific Division has highlighted the extent of the problem. "It's a sad fact that extreme elements of nationalism, racism, and retaliation infect even those who fellowship within our church," he wrote in the division's *Record*.⁹

The situations in the South Pacific, the Balkans, and Rwanda, plus a number of other situations in which many Adventists have become involved politically and racially make it increasingly uncomfortable for the Church to remain silent. Furthermore, repeating the well-worn statement at each new crisis that the Church is not involved in politics, although technically correct, ignores the fact that issues that provoke regional and global national tensions are often not only political in nature, but can also involve ethics.

If, for example, a number of Adventists support an oppressive dictatorial regime, side with terrorists who pursue political or nationalistic agendas by holding hostages, or become involved with mobs that commit genocide against those of another national or tribal minority—including members of their own church—such circumstances should move the worldwide church to do something other than simply publish moralizing and doctrinal pamphlets about its commitment to pacifism and peace. The Church has an obligation to voice its moral concern—even outrage when necessary—in a clear, unbiased, and fair way during times of political crisis, times when its own people might be confused about issues of nationalism and racism. The Church should not spare constituencies of its own that might be caught up in political turmoil.

The South Pacific Division statements that

address the recent crisis in Fiji and the Solomon Islands probably come closest to this goal. The statements are probably the clearest that the Church has ever issued on any political crisis. The Central Pacific Union Mission Report, for example, condemns "violence, racism and the undemocratic actions of the coup leaders," and states with precision that "the Church does not in any way support the armed, illegal and unconstitutional takeover of a government elected in good faith, under constitutional guidelines." The statement also makes clear that the Church was not at all happy that "a number of Adventist church members, currently 'in good and regular standing', have been involved."¹⁰

Likewise, the follow-up document, South-Pacific Division Statement on Ethnic and Political Tensions in the South Pacific, states: "Seventh-day Adventists do not support the overthrow of governments by force. The Church upholds the rule of law in a peaceful society." The statement also addresses the involvement of Adventists in the coups: "With sadness and regret the Church acknowledges that in recent ethnic and political conflicts and coups in the Pacific, some former Seventh-day Adventists and current members have been involved" (see page 66, below). Both documents make it clear that the Church did not support the coup's leaders, their supporters, or the means by which the political ambitions of both were executed. A church that is morally aware could not have done otherwise, even if the clarity of its statements meant rebuking and offending some of its own members.

On the other hand, the official denominational response to the Kosovo Crisis more than a year ago was anything but clear. The Seventh-day Adventist Church Statement on Crisis in Kosovo, released by the Adventist Church World Headquarters on April 6, 1999, contains vague generalities about the denominational humanitarian work, "concern for human rights, religious freedom and rights of minorities," the need to foster "a deeper understanding of and a greater respect for non-discrimination," appreciation for "crying human needs," and hope "for reconciliation" and improvement in the "worsening humanitarian situation in Kosovo and elsewhere in the region." The only recognizable reference to the actual crisis stated that "the Church rejected the use of violence as a method for conflict resolution, be it ethnic cleansing or bombing" (see page 66, below). Such a statement could have easily been interpreted as criticism of both the Yugoslavian regime under Slobodan Milosevic and NATO. Although credit should be given to the Church

for daring to say anything at all about the sensitive Balkan issue, it was disappointing that the Church's statement was so limited.

How could one compare the effort to stop the escalation of national tragedies in the Serbian neighborhood with a regime that had for almost a decade terrorized not only Kosovo but also the entire region, including Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina? How could one ignore the ruined economies, destroyed towns and villages, and hundreds of thousands killed, wounded, displaced, and homeless people? Such diplomatic vagueness would seem questionable even if formulated out of concern for the safety of Serbian Adventists.

However, most discomforting was the lack of any official denominational response at the time of the Rwandan genocide in 1994. Not until two years afterward was anything said. At that point, General Conference president Robert S. Folkenberg delivered a sermon in the Rwandan capital of Kigali in which he addressed the issues of a Christian's responsibility for forgiveness and reconciliation within the context of the Rwandan tragedy. "What makes this worse than all the others is that this is a nation in which 95 percent of the population claimed the name of Christ," he said. "Ninety-five percent . . . was not sufficient to stop the genocide."¹¹

Indeed, the Church should have been more deliberate even before the indictment of pastor Elizaphan Ntakirutima and Folkenberg's visit. Specifically, it should have asked a question that has probably haunted many Adventists outside Rwanda since 1994: What were at least 200,000 Hutu Adventists doing while their tribesmen massacred Tutsi civilians? Calls for forgiveness and reconciliation make sense only after an honest answer is provided. Otherwise it could appear that in the eyes of the Church the crimes committed by its own members are less atrocious than those committed by other people, or that calls to forgiveness and reconciliation should override the need for accountability among those who have committed atrocities.

The Way Ahead—Acquiring the Christian Mind

The days ahead will not lessen the challenges of nationalism among the members of the global and ethnically diverse Adventist community. "We are no

longer a small church. In more and more countries Adventists will come to prominence in shaping society on a multitude of fronts, including the political," stated *Adventist Review* editor William Johnsson in a recent editorial.¹²

Adventists around the world will have plenty of opportunities to be caught up in whirlwinds of local issues. Church leaders will need adequate information to distinguish the victims from the perpetrators of crimes in such conflicts. Given the international political climate, it would be wise for the Church to consider the best ways to handle issues of nationalism that affect its own international community. One is surprised that among the number of resolutions discussed and accepted at the recent General Conference Session in Toronto there was no room for a serious discussion of nationalism, racism, and elitism, particularly in consideration of past General Conference sessions that have considered such issues.

If the Church is to grow in maturity, as well as in numbers, it needs to consider itself as more than an undertaker that buries the dead and expresses condolences to survivors. Unless accompanied with a clear call to accountability, measured or calculated expressions of sorrow and sympathy, calls to forgiveness and reconciliation, or expressions of unfocused condemnation may seem offensive to victims who have felt the cold and brutal hands of oppressors.

One way for the Church to demonstrate its commitment to peace would be to offer assistance in the processes of mediation and reconciliation, especially in those regions where the denomination has more apparent influence. However, the most important challenge for the Church lies within its own membership. How does the Church intend to pursue the serious task of educating its own community about the implications and applications of the gospel within all spheres of human interaction?

Harry Blamires, a Christian sociologist, suggests that churches need to help their communities acquire the "Christian mind—a mind trained, informed, equipped to handle data of secular controversy within a framework of reference which is constructed of Christian presuppositions."¹³ In other words, the most important task of the Church is to help its members to develop Christian minds transformed and educated by the gospel. Perhaps we have assumed too long that the correct doctrine and dry logic of our truth would by itself change people. However, the values of the Kingdom—justice, fairness, love, compassion, neighborliness, peace, freedom, equality, integrity, humility,

respect for human rights and dignity, and the right to be different—all of these need to be cultivated. As President Paulsen said, "racism, elitism and nationalism have no place in the family of God."

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5. The author has made several contacts with people closely related to events in Rwanda since 1994. They have provided him with valuable information, but have requested that their identities remain undisclosed for the time being. For additional information about the Rwanda massacre, see Philip Gourevitch, *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will be Killed With Our Families: Stories from Rwanda* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999).
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SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH STATEMENT ON CRISIS IN KOSOVO

Released by the Office of Public Affairs at the Seventh-day Adventist Church World Headquarters, 6 April 1999

The Seventh-day Adventist Church expresses its grave concern regarding the situation in Yugoslavia, in particular in the Kosovo province. While being concerned about the well-being of its many members and operation of its church organisation in this part of the world, the Church is even more concerned about the worsening humanitarian situation in Kosovo and elsewhere in the region, with hundreds of thousands of displaced and homeless people.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a world-wide religious community and, as a matter of principle, endeavours not to be involved in political issues. The Church has consistently refused to do so and intends to maintain this position in the current crisis centering on Kosovo. Nevertheless, it rejects the use of violence as a method for conflict resolution, be it ethnic cleansing or bombing.

With the Church's long tradition of working actively and quietly for human rights, including in particular religious freedom and the rights of minorities, the Seventh-day Adventist Church is ready to do its part. The Church will endeavour to do so through its world organisational structure, in co-operation with the leaders and members of

the Church in the Balkan region, to foster a deeper understanding of and greater respect for human rights and non-discrimination, to meet crying human needs, and to work for reconciliation between national, ethnic, and religious communities.

In the current crisis, the Seventh-day Adventist Church is committed to doing what it can, through the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA, the humanitarian agency established by the Church), to bring relief to the many thousands of refugees, irrespective of religion, ethnicity or social status, that have fled from the Kosovo province into neighbouring states, while also closely monitoring the situation and needs of the civilian population in Yugoslavia, in and outside of Kosovo. The Church will utilise its infrastructure in the region in its relief efforts.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church urges the international community and government authorities involved to push for an early end to the crisis, on the basis of Christian, moral and ethical principles, of human rights, and good faith negotiations that are fair to all concerned and which may lead to better relationships.

ANN—Adventist News Network—6th April 1999
<http://www.adventpress.com/index1.html>

STATEMENT ON ETHNIC AND POLITICAL TENSIONS IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC

Issued by the Executive Committee of the South Pacific Division (SPD), 14 June 2000

The Seventh-day Adventist Church recognises that this present world is plagued and divided by the results of sin, greed and hatred. A long history of tribal conflict, conquest, war, occupation and political division have left many peoples dispossessed of their land and displaced. There are no totally human solutions to the ethnic conflicts and racial injustices that exist. However, the Church believes that in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, there is healing for human hearts and hope for a new world where justice and righteousness will prevail. Human dignity and equality can be restored through the grace of God in which humans see each other as members of the family of God. In the light of Calvary, hatred gives way to love, selfishness and greed are replaced by respect and service for others. Freedom and peace are the fruit of a life controlled by the Spirit of Christ.

RACISM

Scripture plainly teaches that every person was created in the image of God, who "made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth" (Acts 17:26). Racial and ethnic discrimination is an offence against our fellow human beings who were created in the image of God. In Christ "there is neither Jew nor Greek" (Gal 3:28).

Seventh-day Adventists therefore deplore any attitudes or activities that incite tribal or ethnic conflict or promote racial divisions. The Church upholds the ideal of racial equality and international harmony.

Seventh-day Adventists want to be faithful to the reconciling ministry assigned to the Christian Church. As a worldwide community of faith, the Seventh-day Adventist

Church wishes to witness to and exhibit in its own ranks the unity and love that transcend racial differences and overcome past alienation between races.

POLITICS AND RELIGION

Scripture clearly teaches that government is divinely ordained, and that while our first and highest duty is to God, the Bible instructs Christians to be subject to "the powers that be" (Romans 13:1) and to perform their duties as faithful citizens (Matt 22:21). Seventh-day Adventists therefore do not support the overthrow of governments by force. The Church upholds the rule of law in a peaceful society.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church believes in the separation of church and state and maintains neutrality towards politics. The Church respects the various political processes that exist in different forms of government, but does not become involved in advising Church members in political matters or in supporting any particular parties. Church members who are involved in political or public life by their own personal choice are urged to do nothing that will discredit the cause of God or compromise the standards of the Church. They are encouraged to serve their country and community in a way that will uplift society and bring glory to God.

NON-COMBATANCY

Scripture reveals that life is sacred and has its source in God (Gen 1:11-27) and should not be taken by human hands (Ex 20:13; Matt 19:18). Christians are instructed to "love your enemies and do good to them that hate you" (Matt 5:44). Seventh-day Adventists are therefore opposed to bearing arms and taking up weapons in time of conflict. Rather than inflicting injury or harm on fellow human beings the Church encourages service to their country through loving ministry to the sick or injured. The Church upholds the ideal of peaceful resolution and of practicing the Golden Rule to "do unto others, what you would have men do to you" (Matt 7:12). With sadness and regret the Church acknowledges that in recent ethnic and political conflicts and coups in the Pacific, some former Seventh-day Adventists and current members have been involved. This would suggest that the Church may have failed in promoting the ideals of peace, equality and lawfulness. We confess that in the past our own attitudes to other Christians and those of other ethnic origins may have been unloving and less than the ideal. The values of human dignity, integrity and humility may not have been demonstrated as they should have been.

We therefore appeal to all Seventh-day Adventists to put away all ethnic and tribal differences and help create an atmosphere of co-operation and understanding between all races, cultures, faiths and political persuasions. We call on members to respect governments and the systems of law and justice, to be peacemakers and agents of reconciliation in their communities.


We urge all men and women to pray for the peaceful resolution of present tensions and conflict. We challenge all Church administrators and pastors to pursue a more active role in educating members in a proper understanding of the Gospel and Biblical principles in respect to human relations, armed conflict and our relationship to God and Government, and

FURTHER: In the light of recent events in Fiji and the Solomon Islands, and the potential for further crises in the South Pacific:

1. To release the above statement on Ethnic and Political Tensions in the South Pacific and Christian Responsibility in Political Crisis, and
2. To acknowledge the need for Church administrators and pastors to take a more active role in educating church members and the community to a fuller understanding of the Gospel's application to human relations, and
3. To recommend the convening of a Consultation on Peace and Human Relations by a representative group as soon as is practical, to develop a strategy that will address the situation.

Source: South Pacific Division *Record*, July 8, 2000.

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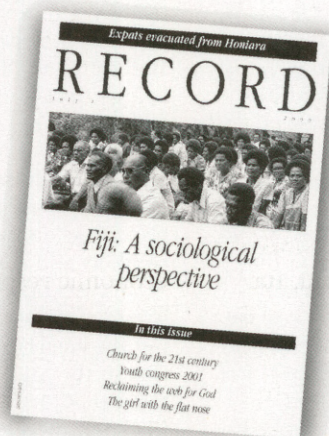
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Fiji: A Sociological Perspective

A sociologist considers George Speight's accession



By Robert Wolfgramm

Reprinted from the July 1, 2000, issue of the *Record* with permission from Signs Publishing Company, Victoria, Australia

Indigenous Fijians comprise about half of Fiji's 800,000 people. Some 99.5 per cent of the indigenous population identify themselves as Christian, belonging to one denomination or another. They identify themselves in either of two ways: First, with the church they were born into—that is, the church affiliation of a relevant parent. This is important since having a religion or, more crucially, a religious label, is as much a part of Fijian identity as having any other cultural marker (such as language or clan-group and so forth).

Or, second, they define themselves by the church they were last baptized into. This is significant because Fijians are increasingly switching churches in ways usually associated with contemporary forms of American Christianity. This source of self-identification, though, doesn't necessarily mean one is practicing regular church attendance, or is a member in good and regular standing.

For every 100 Fijian Christians, 70 will be Methodist and 20 will be Catholic. Of the remaining 10, one will be an Assemblies of God (including other Pentecostal varieties), one a Seventh-day Adventist, and the rest a spread of Anglicans, Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Salvation Army, Presbyterian and others.

Methodism is the dominant form of Fijian Christianity because it arrived first—in the 1830s. It entrenched itself through the 1854 conversion of influential high chief, Seru Cakobau of the kingdom of Bau. Roman Catholicism arrived in the 1860s but did not find an audience until the 1880s and mostly among Cakobau's chiefly rivals in Rewa and Taveuni.

Enter the Adventists

The "three Johns" brought Adventism to Fiji in the 1890s: first through the short-lived work of John Tay (who died in Suva a few months after arrival); then through John Cole on Ovalau island (where Fiji's first capital

Levuka is located); and then John Fulton successfully ministered to high chiefs on Viti Levu. Fulton's legacy saw Adventism successfully established in parts of Fiji where Methodism and Catholicism had failed. Fijians within the chiefdoms of Suva, Ra, Cob, the Wainibuka and Tailevu became strong advocates.

George Speight's Fijian ancestors hail from Tailevu and Ra. He was raised in an Adventist home and baptized at Suvavou—the church headquarters and chiefly village of the original Suva people. (It should be noted that he has not been a practicing Adventist for many years.) His father converted to Adventism in the 1960s and his mother hails from the predominantly Adventist village of Natokalau, Ra.

Although politics eventually drew his father, Sam Speight, away from church commitment, he was instrumental in establishing the English speaking church at the historic Tamavua site in Suva and has, over the years, still been identified as a Seventh-day Adventist.

This was subtly underscored when the strategic importance of being a Fijian became clear because of the racial provisions of the 1990 Constitution. Sam sought and gained retrospective registration as a Fijian in the *Vola Ni Kawwa Bula* (the registry of official Fijians) by taking the name *Savenacca Tokainavo*—a name that may be translated: “loud cry of the remnant”!

That there are Fijian Adventists who strongly support George Speight's pro-indigenous cause cannot be denied. Some also endorse his political means and personal ambitions and are now participating in the crisis. But Fijian church leaders Pastor Waisea Vuniwa and Joe Talemaitoga have rightly and publicly distanced themselves from this stance.

But any Adventists committed to Speight are not doing so because he is “one of us” (that is, his Adventist background), but because they are participants in a wider Fijian Christian nationalism subscribed to by Fijians of *all* denominations.

Reinventing Fiji

Speight's support is Fijian because his desire is to reinvent Fiji along lines that guarantee indigenous political supremacy. His “natural” electorate is the silent majority of Fijians (66 per cent of the indigenous population) who live outside urban centers such as Suva. They understand little of the virtues of globalization and democracy, and have little patience

with the idea of non-Fijian rule of their *vanua* (land and people).

For them, life is a routine of subsistence economy and ritual obligations—as it has been for thousands of years. Few in these rural-island settings have electricity in their homes, and the vast majority are based in villages that have never hosted an Indian visitor. Theirs is a world of geographic isolation and social segregation within a traditional hierarchical polity—a postcard reality from which they can see no reason for departure.

The bottom-line in their outlook is to be found in their relationship to the *vanua* when understood as an economic resource. Of the 4.25 million acres that is Fiji, indigenous Fijians have usufructuary rights to about 3.5 million acres (called native land). But, as any farmer knows, it is not how much land you have, but how good it is. Three-quarters of native land is non-fertile or non-arable land. Useless for large-scale cultivation, it forms the backyard for most Fijian villages.

Much of the rest of their native tide is leased by the government to others, including Indians. The present leases have run for 30 years and have been pegged at a lowly 6 per cent of the undeveloped value of the property. Of the remaining 750,000 acres, about half is Crown land. The other half is the most fertile and arable, but it is freehold and mostly owned by non-Fijian locals or foreigners (including Australian absentee landlords) and beyond the dreams of most Fijians. They have little hope of regaining that land by free market purchase.

Because Fijian freehold land was alienated before the colonial era but fixed forever by that era, Fijians believe themselves to be the truly aggrieved race in this matter.

Christian Nationalist Movement

And this is where their Christianity comes in to play. Speight's support is Christian because the Fijian plight is interpreted by the indigenous nationalists through a biblical lens. Being a persecuted and exploited remnant is a recurring Scriptural theme, especially in the Old Testament. They are encouraged in this by American fundamentalist interpretations of the Bible and funded by independent ministries—some of which are Adventist.

Fijian Christian nationalists see the Fijian people as a kind of Israel, who, despite suffering and hard-

ship, are called to be a light of gospel salvation in the Pacific. One day they will be free of the "stranger" in the land.

This brief includes the desire for the constitutional establishment of Christianity as the state religion for Fiji. For instance, during the consultative process for shaping the 1997 Constitution, this was the largest single issue upon which Fijians made submission—including an official submission in favor of a state religion from the Methodist Church.

While some Adventists support the proposal, the mainstream view is that gloving the hand of religion with the power of the state has prophetic consequences which are potentially totalitarian. This, from an Adventist perspective, is unacceptable. But it is not a new thing. Fijian Christian nationalism has been formed for well over 100 years. No sooner had Christian missions arrived on Viti Levu during the colonial era, than 19th century indigenous prophets like Navosavakadua ("he who speaks but once") arose in Ra proclaiming that the Fijian people already knew about Christ. In fact, the earliest missionaries reported that the creator-god in the Fijian pantheon was one called, Ove (sounds like Jehovah) and were startled to find Fijians practicing circumcision.

By the first decades of the 20th century, another Ra figure, Apolosi Nawai ("lord of the holy water") arose in the Wainibuka to proclaim the same message but with a strand of economic nationalism.

These ideas have been sustained in Fiji since the independence era began in 1970. Viliame Savu from the island of Nayau (the ancestral Lauan home of former prime minister and now deposed president Ratu Mara) set up his Fijian Independent Party in 1972 to proclaim the message of Fijian political exclusivity.

Agitator, Sakeasi Butadroka (from the Rewa delta which is home to Ratu Mara's chiefly wife, Adi Lala) formed the Fijian Nationalist Party at the same time. He later renamed it more explicitly as the Fijian Christian Nationalist Party. The objective was again to rally Fijians to the cause of indigenous supremacy and to the idea that Ratu Mara in particular was a mediator of globalism and democracy—values that would spell the end of Fijian culture and her people.

In 1987, by his military coups, Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka was championed by these Fijian Christian nationalists as one who would fulfill their aims. Rabuka also saw himself in a messianic light as one called by God to defend Fijian Christian values against modernization and secularism.

To help keep him on track, in 1990, Francis Waqa Sokonibogi established the Kudru Na Vanua ("grumbling of the land and her people"—a lobby-group to publicly voice support or protest. As the decade passed, Rabuka, now as prime minister, proved unworthy of his assignment as he openly confessed to sexual infidelities and, worse, evinced shifting toward a more global-democratic perspective on the other.

The Current Situation

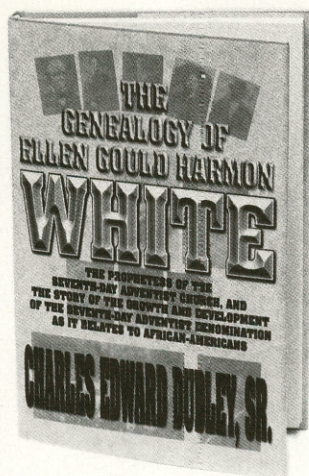
The present upheaval has its immediate roots in 1995 when Rabuka typically promised that he would introduce a more democratic Constitution for Fiji as well as listen to grassroots Fijians (who were avowedly antidemocratic!). After a consultative process, the majority of Fiji's 14 indigenous provinces unsurprisingly rejected proposed revisions for his new draft Constitution, but Rabuka went ahead with its adoption anyway. Fijian Christian nationalists committed themselves to his downfall.

In the 1999 elections, he was swept from office together with the Indian party representing elite business interests. Indigenous disenchantment with the Rabuka era and Indian disenchantment with his elite Indian alliances, opened the way for the election of the labor-dominated People's Coalition government of Mahendra Chaudhry.

That election began a destabilization campaign which has led inexorably to George Speight's accession through the barrel of a gun. It is an outcome that has opportunism riding on the back of patriotism. Failed businessmen, disenchanted militia, ambitious chiefs and ordinary Fijians have all been thrown together by an indigenous Christian nationalism that shows no sign of abating.

Indeed, the more their vision is decried and stymied, the higher the stakes become and the more determined their martyrdom. Whether Speight personally succeeds in establishing their vision or not, his legacy will be that indigenous Christian and nationalist priorities will have to be firmly on the agenda for any future Fiji government.

Robert Wolfgramm is an Adventist academic whose Ph.D. investigated Fijian identity. He has also been a consultant to some Fijian nationalist groups.



That "Great African-American Woman," Ellen Gould Harmon White

The Genealogy of Ellen Gould Harmon White, Charles Edward Dudley Sr. Nashville, Tenn.: Dudley Publishing Services, 1999; 172 pages.

Reviewed by Ronald D. Graybill

Charles Dudley is a skilled, respected, veteran Seventh-day Adventist church administrator, but his venture into genealogy, history, authorship, and book publishing leave much to be desired.

Essentially this book claims that Ellen White, the cofounder and prophetess of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, had African-American ancestry.

Dudley bases his argument on the discovery of a line of Goulds in New Jersey who are of African-American descent. But nowhere does he make a direct connection between these Goulds and the Eunice Gould who was Mrs. White's mother.

Because I am Anglo, I can assume that some will say I am in "denial" to come away from this book unconvinced. But prior to this book, I myself raised the question of Ellen White's racial ancestry (albeit only briefly in a 1982 *Adventist Heritage* article¹). Furthermore, although Dudley says in his book "No one has come forward with the genealogy of the prophetess except on the side of her husband," he is incorrect.

It was I who, back in the 1970s, sought out, in behalf of the E. G. White Estate, where I then worked, a qualified, experienced, licensed genealogical researcher. The White Estate then paid this skilled woman, a Mormon, to trace Ellen White's ancestry back through all lines. She had at her disposal the vast genealogical resources of the Mormon Church. She not only traced Ellen White's ancestry, but also provided photocopies of original documents to support her work. A chart that shows the results of this research has been on sale at all White Estate offices for many years. This research did not support any claim to black ancestry.

The absence of a historical record of black ancestry is not, of course, conclusive. But unlike the question of Thomas Jefferson's relationship to Sally Hemmings, where circumstantial evidence abounds, we have nothing other than Ellen White's facial features and the existence of some African Americans who bear the Gould name to even hint at black ancestry for Ellen White.

Dudley's book has many problems. In small details where I do have personal knowledge, it is appallingly careless. Speaking of the grandchildren of Ellen White, Dudley says Grace married John Gawks (it was Jacques), Arthur married Fried (instead of Frieda) Swingle, and most remarkable of all, Arthur's brother Francis is said to have married a Richard Rub. (Dudley apparently took the name Francis to be that of a female.)

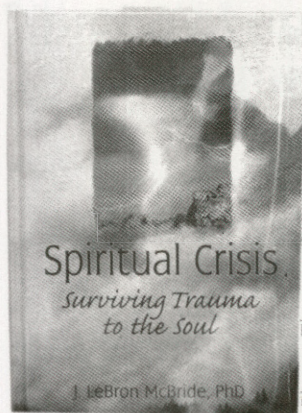
There are references in the back of the book and in some cases reference notes in the text, but some of the works cited cryptically in the notes are not listed in the references. Often cited are the "records of the Ellen G. White Estate," but never with a document file number, and the reader is never told that the "records" of the White Estate are often undigested, unconfirmed raw material, some original, some secondary, some reliable, some wildly fanciful. So although Dudley thanks the White Estate and scholars elsewhere for their help, there is no evidence that anyone with genealogical or historical training—white or black—ever read or approved the final manuscript.

Dudley says, in so many words, "Eunice Gould Harmon, Ellen's mother, was a mulatto." He says that Hazen Foss, her brother-in-law's brother, was a Negro. Dudley's book is full of African Americans named "Gould" and the implication is clear that these were genetically related to Ellen White, indeed, they are sometimes referred to as "cousins." However, the proof is woefully lacking, and what we do find in this book is too often inaccurate.

Notes and References

1. "Leaves from Ellen White's Family Album," *Adventist Heritage* 7 (spring 1982): 6-19.

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The Bumpy Road to Wellville: Wholistic Treatment for Spiritual Trauma

***Spiritual Crisis: Surviving Trauma to the Soul.* By J. LeBron McBride. Binghamton, N.Y.: The Haworth Press, 1998; 182 pages.**

Reviewed by Michael E. Cafferky

Is the process of joining (or leaving) the Seventh-day Adventist Church traumatic to the soul? If so, what should be the appropriate care given to a person in transition? Are other dynamics present during spiritual crisis than the classical, often-cited battle between good and evil? When a person experiences extremes in religious belief, how should those around her discharge the responsibility to care in a manner that respects the whole person? What attention should the ministry of spiritual nurture pay to the trauma of changing denominational identity? Is religious burnout something more than a problem with loyalty to Christ? Through his own pilgrimage into and then out of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (residency at Wildwood Sanitarium followed by graduate study at Andrews University Theological Seminary and pastoral ministry) J. LeBron McBride contemplated these issues. Then, using his professional training and experience as a caregiver and educator of healing professionals, he wrote about surviving trauma to the soul.

If as you read this book you did not know McBride's connection with the Seventh-day Adventist Church, you might remark at how closely his views of wholeness parallel those prized in Adventism. This is no coincidence. As he develops his thesis, McBride acknowledges (without naming Adventism) that his book contains reflections on his own religious experience. Yet he does not take a hostile approach as he attempts to explode the myth that a person cannot be happy and committed to spiritual issues after changing churches.

As important as McBride's own pilgrimage is, the book contains more than a story about a spiritual journey. The book is a competent treatment of the nature and implications of spiritual crisis; it is probably the most comprehensive wholistic study of spiritual crisis published to date.

One of the reasons this book is important is that McBride reveres the sacred, taboo ground of religious experience. McBride's thesis is that spirituality is at the core of physical, mental, and social experiences. Whereas trauma in any one of these areas leads to corresponding spiritual crisis, changes in spiritual life are also traumatic. Care for individuals in spiritual crisis is most appropriate when the needs of the whole person are taken into consideration.

Caring for individuals in spiritual crisis involves a careful process that McBride outlines. *Spiritual Crisis* is written for physicians, counselors, and psychotherapists interested in understanding spiritual dynamics in the lives of clients. The book is also useful in a wider arena for pastors and church leaders who care daily for individuals experiencing changes in religious life.

The task for Adventists implied in McBride's book is to provide spiritual care for individuals in our community in a way that helps them survive spiritual changes. For example, McBride asks, what changes would be made in Adventist evangelism and church growth if the wholeness perspective were used to guide the care of those in spiritual transition? When Adventists talk among themselves about people who leave the Church, what message about spiritual trauma do they give to those who remain? When they warn youth about the dangers of leaving the Church, what do youth learn about spirituality? When Adventists reduce the theology of spiritual transition to a battle between good and evil, between right church and wrong church, do they provide spiritual care appropriate to the need?

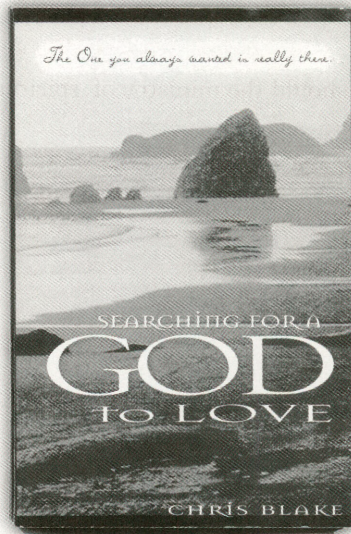
McBride's work should spark vigorous discussion in a variety of religious settings, not least among those interested in contemplating how Christian ministry should continue to offer spiritual value to its communities.

Contemporary minds perceive spirituality as something more than pure doctrine and official church membership. Spirituality should be integrated with human life. Consumers want spiritual care that respects integration during times of spiritual trauma, and if they do not receive this in the Church, they will look elsewhere.

Michael E. Cafferky holds a master's degree in public health and a doctorate in marketing. His book, *Patients Build Your Practice*, was published by McGraw Hill. miccaf@bmi.net

Searching for God's Map of the Cosmos

by Chris Blake



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Prayer—Communication with a Friend

Unusual maps fascinate me, whether of ocean floors or the surface of the moon. The first time I saw a world map created in the former Soviet Union I was intrigued to find the U.S.S.R. stretching across three-fourths of the world; the United States was split in half on either side. Hanging on my office walls are maps of “Native American Tribes” in North America (I live in Dakota), a “Down-Under Map of the World” with Australia dominating top center; and a photo of the Milky Way galaxy. Each map gives a different perspective on reality. If for some reason I’m feeling stressed, I’m calmed when I look at the Milky Way’s 100,000 stars and think, *How does this matter in all of that?* I think about how God views the universe, the earth, me. I’d love to see God’s map of the cosmos, and in a way I can—through prayer.

I don’t know how prayer works. I don’t understand exactly how God “speaks” to us, how He honors our personal freedom and yet accomplishes His designs, or why some *obviously* good answers don’t occur, and some

obviously bad requests seem to gain a positive response. I can't comprehend why God seems to intervene in seemingly small matters when children are dying. So when I share what appeals to me about prayer, it's not with the idea that I have God all figured out. I do know this: somehow prayer enables God and ennobles me.

Often we labor under the illusion that prayer is only something formal, something desperate, something absolutely magical. Sir Eric Roll tells the story of a little boy who was overheard praying fervently, "Tokyo, Tokyo, Tokyo." Later, when he was asked why, the boy replied, "Well, you see, I've just taken my geography examination in school, and I have been praying to the Lord to make Tokyo the capital of France." Prayer isn't about miraculously changing the world atlas. Prayer is primarily communicating with God—as vital a role to spiritual health as breathing is to physical health.

A common problem with prayer is found in not hearing any answer. In praying we can feel like Ernestine, Lily Tomlin's nasal telephone operator character: "Have I reached the person to whom I am speaking?" A man once confessed to C. S. Lewis, "I can believe in God all right, but what I cannot swallow is the idea of Him attending to several hundred million human beings who are all addressing Him at the same moment." In his answer, recorded in *Mere Christianity*, Lewis presents the possibility that God's time is different from our time:

Suppose I am writing a novel. I write "Mary laid down her work; next moment came a knock at the door!" For Mary who has to live in the imaginary time of my story there is no interval between putting down the work and hearing the knock. But I, who am Mary's maker, do not live in that imaginary time at all. Between writing the first half of that sentence and the second, I might sit down for three hours and think steadily about Mary. I could think about Mary as if she were the only character in

the book and for as long as I pleased, and the hours I spent in doing so would not appear in Mary's time (the time inside the story) at all.

God is not hurried along in the Time-stream of this universe any more than an author is hurried along in the imaginary time of his own novel. He has infinite attention to spare for each one of us. He doesn't have to deal with us in the mass.

You are as much alone with Him as if you were the only being He had ever created.

God is not too busy for us, nor is He unwilling to respond. Bill Hybels writes in *Too Busy Not to Pray*, "I get tired of hearing about 'secrets to prayer' to get past God's reluctance, to reveal the little-known way to pester our way into His presence." We don't need to beg God. God is better than that. The Bible does say we need to persist. Why?

When he was thirteen, Nathan said to me, "I want a Mercedes." Through deft questioning, I came to realize that he meant his mother and I should go out *now* and buy a Mercedes for him, though he would allow us to drive it until he received his driving permit. He seemed sincere enough, though obviously added.

Understand, I love to give things to Nathan; I gain great pleasure in giving, and I especially enjoy surprising him with gifts. He doesn't have to beg me to do it—I'm looking for opportunities to give. But I didn't buy him the Mercedes he asked for. Three considerations came to mind: 1. Did he truly mean it? (He quit asking shortly afterward.) 2. Did he really need it? 3. Would I be doing him more harm to grant his request? In the case of the missing Mercedes, my finite wisdom seemed to register *No*, *No*, and *Yes*.

Persisting in prayer may indicate the depth of our desire, and as countless cautionary tales point out, we should be careful what we ask for. Furthermore, our motivation can be a problem. A critical distinction looms between a childlike dependence on God and a



*"God is not hurried
along in the time
stream of this uni-
verse any more than
an author is hurried
along in the imagi-
nary time of his
own novel"*

—C. S. Lewis

childish demanding of God. Part of prayer maturity is this: we need to learn not to get what we want but to want what we get. It may be appropriate for a one-year-old to view Daddy primarily as a giver of horsy rides and chewing gum, but one would hope a thirty-one-year-old would hold a more complete view of him. We truly love God when we love Him more than the gifts He offers.

When God refuses to perform just because we say so, He frees us from our false, idolatrous notions. Richard Foster reflects, "For me, the greatest value in my lack of control was the intimate and ultimate awareness that I could not manage God. God refused to jump when I said, 'Jump!'" For this reason, I'm somewhat uncomfortable with aspects of the "claiming promises" approach to prayer; as though we can hold a grudging God's feet to the fire with "Remember? You *promised*." Most of life is conditional to some degree—my promise to take the children to the park Sunday may be contingent on a thunderstorm rolling in or the car expiring.¹ On the other hand, promises are designed to be kept. Asking, believing, and claiming God's promises have resulted in astounding answers to prayer. Jesus' prayer, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done" allows the wiggle room God deserves, especially with absurd or selfish requests.

Often God takes an indirect route to answer our prayers. The mother of Augustine prayed all night that God would stop her son from going to Italy because she wanted him to become a Christian. While she was praying, he sailed away to Italy, where he converted to Christianity. Naturally, his mother believed for a time that her prayers had gone unheard. As with any healthy relationship on earth, a friendship with God is characterized by mutual freedom.

The Bible book of Psalms merits a subtitle: *Raw Prayer from Passionate Believer*. I used to wonder why some psalms are in the Bible, for they are riddled with doubt and violence. (What prayers would you publish if you were God?) Psalmists fume, harangue, question, and scold. They also laud, celebrate, confess, and exalt. Alden Thompson writes about his growing experience with the psalms:

I developed the habit of being quite careful of what I did and said in God's presence. My prayers were polite. Any agony of soul was kept well under cover... Now bring the two problems together: the violent and passionate words of the psalms and my polite little prayers to the great God of the universe... I

finally awoke to the fact that God's people had been quite frank with Him all along. I had simply robbed myself of a great privilege... If David and the psalmists could be open with God, why couldn't I? And that was the beginning of a real friendship with my God.

Huckleberry Finn discovered that he couldn't pray a lie. God is interested in honest communication, but with God we go to another level. God knows we cannot live in peace with unresolved guilt, so Jesus says to first clear up directly with a person any tension or misunderstanding, then confess our specific sins to God to receive the healing of memory.² It's as hard to absolve yourself of your own guilt as it is to kiss the top of your own head. God cleanses our wounds and sets us free.

King Frederick II, an eighteenth-century king of Prussia, was visiting a prison in Berlin when a story of confession developed. The inmates tried to convince him that they had been framed, duped, and unjustly imprisoned. Amid their protests of innocence, the king spotted one man sitting alone in a corner oblivious to the commotion. When the king asked the man what he was there for, the prisoner replied, "Armed robbery, Your Honor."

The king asked, "Were You guilty?"

"Yes Sir," he answered. "I entirely deserve my punishment."

The king then issued an order. "Release this guilty man. I don't want him corrupting all these innocent people."

When we pray, we should ask for mercy, not justice.

Notes and References

1. The farmer maybe praying for that thunderstorm. People pray for contradictory answers, and God cannot honor both requests.

2. Terry Muck asked hundreds of spiritual leaders, "How do you know when you need to pray?" Their most common response was, "I get irritable with people."

Chris Blake is professor of communication at Union College in Lincoln, Nebraska, and former editor of *Insight* magazine. His book, *Searching for a God to Love* is available at www.adventistbookcenter.com or from the ABC at 1-800-765-6955. It is also being released to the general public by Word Publishing.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Write to Bonnie Dwyer at
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Jurisdictional issues in the retirement system

Permit me, a regional conference president, to speak to the article entitled "Regional Conferences Withdraw from the NAD Pension Plan." It appears in your vol. 28, no. 2 issue for spring 2000. The cover blurb for this article reads "Rebellion in the Regional Conferences."

Your headline use of the term "withdraw" is unfortunate. What is factual, of course, is that *some* of the regional conferences have voted not to participate in the North American Division's new defined contribution plan *as announced and as currently structured*.

The overall, residual issue is whether NAD's old defined benefit plan *ever* was the best plan available for *all* NAD employees, and also a fair plan in terms of its near-exclusive allocating of primary funding costs to *all* NAD local conferences. On both counts, we believe it was not.

At core, the retirement issue is a jurisdictional issue. The issue is whether the North American Division and its long-serving Retirement Board necessarily are the *best*, or rightful and *only*, NAD dispensers of NAD workers' retirements. Some of us believe they are not.

Changes must be made. Changes are mandated, if good management of resources is to prevail and if *all* NAD retirees are to receive the best possible retirements, to which they certainly are entitled as faithful workers. Currently, they do not receive the *best possible retirements*.

What these changes are, and *where* they should come; this is what is being explored. NAD's Task Force on retirement issues is convened because there are arresting, if merely temporary, differences of

viewpoint. Discussions toward agreement are underway. I predict that you will see other NAD local conference presidents join those of us who elect to raise this crucial issue. I predict that agreement will be reached and comity will prevail.

In this context, *Spectrum's* unwarranted headline usage of the words "withdraw" and "rebellion" clearly displays a distinct journalistic agenda, especially coupled, as *Spectrum* clearly intended, with this fairly amazing, gratuitous statement by the article's writer: "Ironically, weeks after the Race Summit, the war for separation has risen once more with diminishing room for compromise."

I chair the regional presidents. I am a member of NAD's Task Force on retirement issues. I am unaware of the Task Force's addressing any of what your article so far-reachingly beyond facts discusses. I strongly suggest that the "war for separation" and "withdrawal" scenarios you contrive and then discuss are bogus, manufactured, overreaching, and inappropriate. It is a distinct disservice to all that for which you profess such great solicitude.

Alvin M. Kibble, President
Allegheny East Conference

Author Julie Z. Lee responds

The intent of the article was not to cause contention but to report the grievances of regional conference members who approached us with the situation concerning the NAD pension plan. The wording in the article reflects that used by the subjects interviewed (among them, members and leaders of the regional conference) and was not selected to project a "distinct journalistic agenda." While the general issue may be whether or not the NAD's pension plan is ideal for all NAD employees, the research provided in the article focused specifically on the effects of the plan on regional conference mem-

bers. A more careful analysis of the article and the entire issue (along with past issues) will reveal that *Spectrum* has always striven to provide an accurate and fair forum in which to discuss genuine matters surrounding our church, including those concerning the regional conferences.

Julie Z. Lee
Angwin, California

Editor responds

The distinct and only journalistic agenda that *Spectrum* had in publishing this article was simply to inform readers about events that had taken place.

Bonnie Dwyer, Editor

Rethinking one's faith

First let me complement *Spectrum* for the Web site. Though I have never commented on your work, I have been enjoying all the issues through the years, especially those articles that challenge me to rethink my faith. I cannot imagine me being an Adventist without this magazine.

Wolfgang Witzig
Sao Paulo, Brazil

Reviewing Revelation

I wish to thank *Spectrum* (winter 2000) for reporting on the annual meeting of the Adventist Society for Religious Studies that convened in Boston, November 18-20, 1999, around the theme, "The Apocalypse of St. John."

Only time can disclose where the weight of scholarship is heading. But it does appear to me, as the coordinator for the meeting, that the overall sweep of the meeting was to support a movement afoot for at least the last fifty years within Adventist scholarship—to read the Bible for what it says.

A re-reading of Jon Paulien's foundational paper reveals the quarrel Adventist scholars have had with their fellow believers over the infusion of speculative and allegorical eisegesis in support of Adventist doctrine. The new approaches to Revelation, exemplified in Roy Adam's presidential address on the meaning of Revelation to the presently oppressed of the world, do not so much replace what we have been saying about Revelation as to add to it.

Ernie Bursey, Dean
School of Theology, Walla Walla College

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Why the United States Should Not Be a Christian Nation

FROM
AAF

Because it is a political season, those of us who live in the United States often hear that we should elect leaders who will make it a Christian nation. One minister recently declared on television that if he lived in Japan he would expect a Shinto government and if he lived in Indonesia he would expect a Muslim government. Because he lives in the United States, he stated, he expects it to have a Christian government. He asserted that the United States has always been a Christian nation and always should be.

He was partly right. Many of the Europeans who first settled on this continent were looking for religious freedom for themselves, but not for others. They established colonies that conformed to their respective versions of Christianity in many ways. Some made it illegal to engage in business on Sundays. Some used stocks to humiliate and torture those they deemed wayward. Some executed women they called "witches." To put it gently, these pioneers did not embrace "the aloha spirit."

It is also the case, however, that others who pioneered this nation, particularly some who prospered in the middle Atlantic states in the eighteenth century, believed that the government of the United States should be religiously neutral. Some of those who wanted the nation to have no state religion were skeptics. Others wanted the federal government to leave this matter in the hands of the various states. A number were believers who realized that the only way to guarantee religious freedom for themselves was to grant it to others, too. There were also Christians who agreed with Roger Williams, who had founded Rhode Island in 1636 on the principle that "forced worship stinks in the nostrils of God."

Given these different beginnings, it is not surprising that those of us who call the United States home have long experienced a tug-of-war between those who want its government to be Christian and those who want it to be free. Both sides claim to be faithful to the past. Both sides marshal arguments and lines of evidence. Both sides spend much time, money, and energy promoting their views. So far, for the most part, the idea has prevailed that the government of the United States should make it possible for persons of all faiths and no faith to live as they wish—providing they do not harm others. We can hope that it will continue to do so.

One consideration along these lines is that the United States is one of the few nations in the history of humanity to organize itself this way. The practice of formally or informally giving one religion a favored position has been more common. But who needs another nation with a government that officially endorses Christianity? We have had plenty of them already! Furthermore, the record of nations with Christian governments is not encouraging. Tyranny, superstition, and bloody conflict have disgraced them far too often. Hardly anyone would freely choose to return to such circumstances.

Those who say the United States should be a Christian nation today may believe that this time, if given permission to do so, we Christians would rule well. This is doubtful. We are all human beings. When given too much power we almost always abuse it. This is as true of those of us who are Christians as it is of everyone else.

Most importantly, Christianity does not need to be enforced by the state in order to flourish. If anything, the opposite is the case. Where the government officially endorses one form of Christianity, churches are often empty and support often low. However, where Christian churches realize that no one else will invest in their preservation and growth, indicators of involvement are generally higher. One of the best ways to kill a thriving church is to make it a nation's official religion.

Many of those who say the United States should be a Christian nation probably don't mean that its government should enforce one religion on everyone. Their point is that the nation's policies should be fair and that those who implement them should be honest. Of this there can be no doubt. But one does not have to be a Christian to favor just policies or to be a person of integrity. The links between religion and morality are more subtle and complex than that.

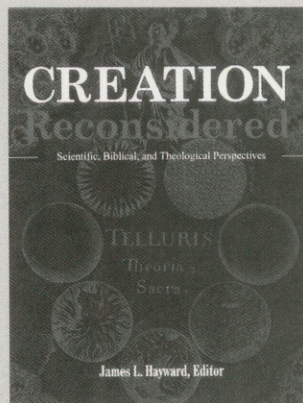
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David R. Larson
AAF President

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In honor of Sallie Lorenz
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Canterbury Village



We smile at the Shakers
of Canterbury Village,
Who hung their chairs upside down

And stomped so hard
(on triple-layered oak)
That farmers in the valley
Heard them on Sunday mornings
Through the still Sabbath air.

Yet they knew the secret
Of drawing worldly milk
From holy cows

Of turning, turning,
Work boots to dancing slippers

And of taking this rough stuff
This everyday cotton
To weave airy angel wings.

They hang here still—
By one perfect clothes peg.

by Nancy Hoyt Lecourt
New Hampshire, 1995

SPECTRUM

THE JOURNAL OF THE ASSOCIATION OF ADVENTIST FORUMS

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